

THE BEGUM'S DAUGHTER



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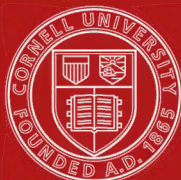
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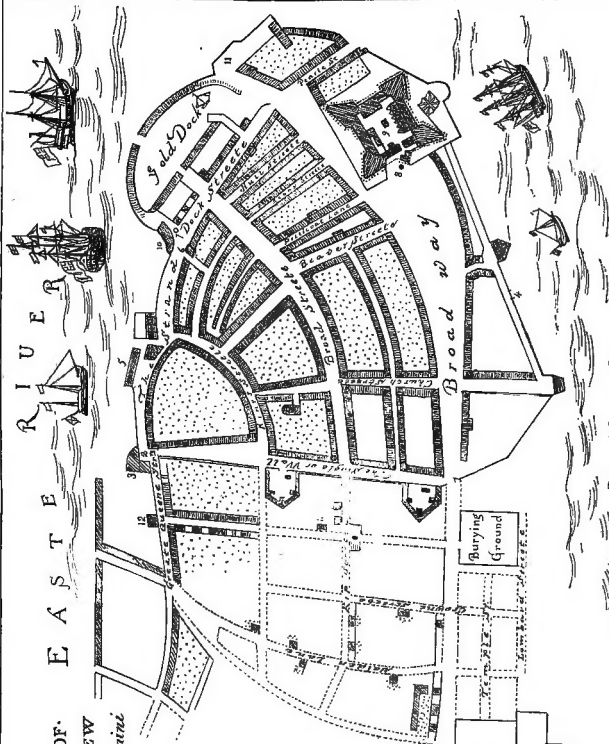
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THE BEGUM'S DAUGHTER



A DESCRIPTION OF
THE TOWNE OF NEW
YORKE Anno Domini

1690



Hudsons River

- 1 Land port
- 2 Water port
- 3 Fly black house
- 4 Battery
- 5 Slip Battery of 5 guns
- 6 The Stadt house
- 7 The Cage and Stacks
- 8 The Fort Wall and Ramp
- 9 The Chapel in the Fort
- 10 Stallion Battery of 5 guns
- 11 Whitehall Battery of 15 guns
- 12 The slaughter houses

THE
BEGUM'S DAUGHTER

BY

EDWIN LASSETTER BYNNER

AUTHOR OF

"AGNES SURRIAGE," "PENELOPE'S SUITORS," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. T. MERRILL

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1890
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PREFACE.

A NATURAL surprise will be felt by those not critically acquainted with early New York history to find so extraordinary a personage as the Begum introduced as a resident of the little Dutch town of two centuries ago. Her name, marriage, and residence there are, however, recorded as facts in more than one work of high authority. Until lately these statements have not been questioned. Now, however, there comes forward a sceptic who, by the citation of a passage from the family record in a famous old Bible, throws doubt upon the whole matter.

Reluctantly, therefore, we hand the point over to the pundits to settle, and sadly confess ourselves unable to vouch for the identity of one of the most interesting persons in our drama.

Of the numerous authorities consulted for what is true in the following story, the greater part are dead and gone. Among the living the author gratefully acknowledges his especial indebtedness to Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, the accomplished historian of New

York, for much material drawn from her graphic narrative; to Mrs. Gertrude L. Vanderbilt for many hints gleaned from her charming book on early Flatbush; to Mr. William Kelly, the assistant-librarian of the New York Historical Society, and to the Pundita Ramabai, the distinguished Hindoo lately visiting in this country, for valuable suggestions.

E. L. B.

Boston, April 15, 1890.

THE BEGUM'S DAUGHTER.

I.

IT was market-day ; the most worthy and worshipful burgomaster and schepens of Nieuw Amsterdam turned over in bed, stretched their fat legs, and recognized that it was time to get up, while all the host of the groote en kleine Burgerrecht, at much the same time and in much the same way, did the like.

“Burgomaster and schepens,” — the sounding old titles still haunted their dreams, although done away with more than a score of years before, when that choking monosyllable “York” displaced dear old “Amsterdam” in the city style ; but notwithstanding the treaty of Westminster and despite its English name, the little town was still Dutch to its heart’s core, yielding with sorry grace to the rule of the Papist Stuart, and viewing with sullen dislike the outlandish beasts blazoned upon his flag yonder above their little fort.

After all, it was their High-Mightinesses of the Staats-General who were at fault. They had bungled the business at Westminster, and finding themselves at a loss, coolly threw over their infant colony.

Deep was the anger and grievous the shame of the loyal burghers on learning that their little town

had been tossed without scruple into the diplomatic balance as a makeweight.

But the milk was spilled, and what availed crying? All the more patiently, on account of their wrath at the Staats-General, they bowed their necks under the new yoke, — a yoke destined never to be lifted in their day and generation. Luckily, it proved no very irksome burden. They were left to go pretty much their own gait. Their hearth-stones were held sacred. They ate their suppen and rolliches of an evening, smoked their pipes in the chimney-nook, and upon the Lord's Day waddled their wonted way to the Gereformeerde Kerche, cased each in who shall say how many redundant pairs of breeches, to hear Dominie Selyns expound the sacred word from the pure text approved by the classis of Amsterdam.

Town affairs, too, were for the most part still left to their guidance. Indeed, so long as stern old Sir Edmund Andros was kept busy yonder by the Boston Puritans, there was little fear of encroachment from his easy-going lieutenant, who, as all the world knew, had long been sighing to get back to his London fogs.

It was market-day, early in May, in the year of grace 1689, — a memorable month and a memorable year in the annals of the town. The newly risen sun, shining across the low plains of Midwoud and Breuckelen and over the rounded peaks of Remsen's Hoodgts, showed the little community already astir.

Outside the city wall, which stretched across the island from river to river, following nearly the line of the street which still bears its name, and gathered before the Landpoort, which stood at the head of

Broadway, a motley group of country-folks, afoot, on pillions, or in ox-carts laden with produce for the market, waited impatiently for the opening of the gates.

Down at the water-side, meanwhile, there was another and livelier scene. Crowded about the entrance to the dock, a fleet of small craft were awaiting the signal to swarm into the little basin and unload. Scattered over the surface of the two rivers to the north and east, other boats were making speed to come up. In the distance a belated ketch could be seen tacking her way through the Hoofden, while along the misty coast-line of Staaten Island a group of tiny specks like bobbing corks showed a flotilla of Indian canoes, all bound for the same point.

Within the walls, the smoke curling from the chimney-tops showed that the thrifty huysvrouw was wrestling with her cranes and pot-hooks over the open kitchen fire, in preparation of the morning meal. Up and down the chief thoroughfares and in many a humbler street negro slaves were busy with mop and broom, scrubbing the high stoops and polishing the brass knockers, singing, whistling, or chattering back and forth to each other in their grotesque African-Dutch patois; ceasing their pranks for the moment as the schout, with grim look and heavy step, strode past, jingling the massive keys of the Landpoort.

Presently from the church in the fort rang out the mellow peal of the old bell, captured years before by a Dutch man-of-war from a Spanish galleon. It was the signal for the day to begin. In a trice the little town awoke to life and activity, — the gates were thrown open, the country-folks swarmed in, the streets were filled with tradesmen and artisans going to their

tasks, while the noise of hurrying feet, the creaking of the heavy ox-carts, the rattle of the windmills, the far-echoing hammer-blows of carpenters and blacksmiths, the barking of dogs, the lowing of cattle, and the shrill laughter of children swelled the opening chorus of the day.

A large open space over against the fort was set apart for the *marktvelt*, which on market-days became the centre of life and affairs. A line of rude booths on the eastern side, a row of ox-carts opposite, with their tails turned inward for the better display of their goods, and an oblong grass-plot in the midst were the principal features.

Now it was a scene of turmoil, as the busy traders and hucksters bustled about disposing their wares in a fashion the most fit to tempt the buyer. Here the sturdy farmers from *Vlacktebos*, *Nieuw Utrecht*, and *Ompoge* disposed upon the clean straw in their carts the carcasses of calves, hogs, turkeys, and geese, flanked by heavy casks filled with salt beef and pork of their own curing. In the opposite booths the thrifty matrons from *Ghmoenepaen*, *Vlissingen*, *Nieuw Haerlem*, or *Boomtre's Hoeck*, with hoods thrown back, arms bared, hips padded to abnormal dimensions by numberless petticoats, made haste to set forth the products of their dairies, assisted by stolid, rosy-cheeked young women, wearing close-quilted caps, heavy gold ear-rings, bright copper buckles to set off their hob-nailed shoes, and fancy jackets to relieve their homespun petticoats. Squatting upon the green-sward in the middle space, Indians of the *Corchang*, *Secatang*, and *Najack* tribes gravely looked about on the noisy scene, and awaited customers for their venison, wild-fowl, skins, and birch-bark water-spouts.

Hardly were the wares set in order when the customers came flocking to the spot. Forth from the low brick houses, with their high stoops and battlemented gables, which lined the chief thoroughfares, came the worshipful magistrates, the rich tradesmen, the reverend dominie, the learned schoolmaster, some with slaves at their heels bearing hampers; while filing down Broadway, along the winding Strand, through Winkle and Pearl and Hoogh streets, and skirting the canal in the Heeren-Gracht, came craftsmen, laborers, and serving-men, the latter with bare heads, wooden shoes, red-baize waistcoats, and leather aprons, all bringing their baskets to be filled.

Immediately the market-place resounds with haggling, chaffering, and good-natured jest, as the buyers, roaming from booth to cart, cheapen the wares which the crafty dealer has set at a price from which he can safely afford to abate.

"What will your worship, this morning? Here you have eggs new laid by my own fowls in Midwood, — you'll never find an addled egg in Annetje's basket; here's twaelft, too, smoked by myself, only one string of seawant; or if you are for herbs to stuff the goose for Lord's Day, here, look you! put your worshipful nose to these!"

"Cabbages, my vrouw? Feel o' these! — your own bosom is not more firm and white; and ei! do you pass by such apples as yonder? Pinkster Bloomitjes, — the first o' the year; no winter's leavings, mind ye; there's not their like in the velt. Come, what say ye? The cask for a beaver?"

But a neighbor with shriller tongue has lured away the wavering customer: —

"Who's for cheese? See ye here, all made from

cream, sweet cream in my own bouwerie at Sapokanican. Butter too,—let that melt on your tongue! it costs nothing.”

“Here, John, son of John!” shouts a lusty farmer-youth from his cart to a lean-looking artisan. “Come you here and buy something to fill out your skin! You’d best not come to Seawanacky, lest the crows get ye!”

“The pot calls the kettle black. Your own bones are not so far out of sight, junker, for all you feed yonder with the cows and pigs in your bouwerie. What’s here?”

“Look for yourself!—tarwe, three guilders the schepel, maey’s, the like is not to be found in the market, and erten; your huysvrouw’s eyes ’ll gladden at the sight.”

“That will they not; ‘a burnt child dreads the fire.’ The last schepen was musty. Take care you come not in the way o’ my Elsie, or your ears are like to make acquaintance with the dish-clout.”

An hour or two of this, and the bustle is over. Such is the strife among the thrifty townsfolk to be on hand at the opening of the market, and thereby get the pick of the goods, that long before noon the bulk of the business is done.

Thereupon the dealers draw a breath of relief and compare notes; the farmers fill their pipes and talk over their crops, the wives gossip about their babes and kitchens, the daughters chatter of sillier matters.

“Come, Gertryd, the best is over; let’s away!”

“Not so fast! I have herbs yet, and my hoof-kaas is not sold.”

“What matter? Take it back; ’t will do for an-

other time. Come away, and let us see what new things are for sale."

"Not I; 't is not for nothing I got the best place to-day."

"You'll find it against your coming back; the market-place is not like to melt and run into the sea."

"All the same, good luck comes not twice in one day. I'll hold my post till all is gone — Resel, your worship? Fine and white; take some home to your huysvrouw, or you'll get no olykoeks! What mean you to buy, Annetje?—a cradle? You and Claes must be of a mind by this!"

"Who knows?" and the buxom Annetje tossed her head.

"Poh! never tell me he has not spoken yet!"

"That will I not; nor tell you anything about it."

"Come!"

"You would know what I am to buy?"

"Since 't is no secret."

"Well, then, 't is no child's gear for those who may never see the light, but three ells duffels, needles and thread —"

"So! a likely story!"

"Sausage, Mynheer! four guilders in good strung seawant."

Nearly opposite the Stadthuys on the corner of the Heeren-Gracht stood the mansion of Van Cortlandt, the worshipful mayor of the town.

Duly at the ringing of the bell the worthy mayor came forth upon the stoop, followed by an old negro slave with a basket.

There was a cloud upon the magistrate's face; he

paused a moment to reflect, and evidently changing his purpose of going to market himself sent the negro instead, while with a preoccupied air he bent his own steps towards the Stadthuys.

Hardly was he out of sight when the door again opened, and a youth appeared upon the stoop, busily engaged in mending a fishing-tackle which he carried in his hand. Turning in the direction opposite to that taken by his father, he crossed the bridge spanning the canal at the foot of the Heeren-Gracht and sauntered slowly along the Strand, too much absorbed in his task to note the passers-by.

"Is that Van Cortlandt's junker?" asked one burly citizen of another.

"It needs not to ask; has he not the mark of the tribe, — a fair outside with a worm at the heart?"

"What worm is that?"

"Pride and vain-glory; they would set up for lords and princes in this new world, now that they have lands to match the titles."

"Look yonder, Maretje!" cried an old crone to her gossip. "Here comes the worshipful mayor's son, the fairest junker in Nieuw Amsterdam."

"Have a care lest some of the prying English hear that name!"

"'T is the good old name."

"'T is treason now to speak it."

"But the junker, look! he's close upon us! Saw you ever such a skin upon a man? 'T is like milk and honey, and his hair shines like silk."

"His broad shoulders please me better, and his straight legs; he's a lad of mettle already, I'll warrant him, and his chin not yet ripe for the razor. What has he in his hand?"

"A hook and line; he goes to catch sun-fish in the Kolch."

"Ei! he'll find other fish to catch one of these days; he'll have but to cast his hook to get the best."

"He has never a thought that way yet. Mark you how he passed Elsie Vanderdonck's fluttering chicks not a moment since? — a wag of the head, but never a glance back to see if they be cocks or pullets."

"And they, silly fools, darting their eyes out at him!"

"'Tis pride in him, they say."

"His mother had not suckled him else."

"'Tis the proudest huysvrouw in the land. Mark you the pace she holds at kerche, and the air wherewith she looks about?"

"'Tis said the worshipful burgomaster stands in awe of her."

"Who talks of burgomasters?"

"Pardon! — my old tongue will never learn their new names; but as for Gertryd Schuyler, 't would be a marvel if she had not given some of her spirit to her brood."

"Well may one carry a high head with a purse so deep."

"There be others with deeper purses, but who else counts back his forefathers to Russian dukes?"

"What are their dukes to us? The bargains'll all be gone at market, with your lagging. Come!"

Thus prattling, the two old gossips went their way to market, while young Stephanus Van Cortlandt kept along the Strand until he came to the Waterpoort, the name given to the gate at the foot of Wall Street, close to the East River, where the old wall was pierced by an opening which gave egress to the country beyond. Here stood awaiting him a youth of

about his own age, and similarly dressed in a long-skirted coat with silver buttons, linsey-woolsey knee-breeches, clocked stockings, and buckled shoes.

"Hola there, Cornelis! have you waited long?"

"Did you not say two hours after sunrise? The dial had passed the mark before I started, and see now yonder shadow, how it slants!"

"'T was no fault of mine. I could not come fasting, and some saucy sailor from the Massachusetts must needs have speech with my worshipful father, which kept the table waiting."

"What matters the reason, so you are come? I have not wasted the time, you see," holding up his fishing-rod, with the name *Cornelis De Peyster* rudely cut in the bark.

"Good! we are in luck," said Van Cortlandt, as they passed through the gate. "We may get some roach, for the wind is in the south."

"How came you so weather-wise?"

"Look yonder at Jan Vinge's wind-mill!"

"Since your eyes are so good, look further, and tell me what rare sight is that in the Magde Paetje."

"I see nothing out of the common," said Van Cortlandt, indifferently, turning his eyes in the direction indicated.

"There again! Oh, never mind, — 't is a bird, mayhap."

"What are you at?"

"A bird they say charms you with her song."

Van Cortlandt's face kindled with a look of intelligence. He scanned the distant object, muttering, —

"There be more red hoods than one."

"Look now!"

"You 're right; 't is she!" starting eagerly to go.



“Here he comes! here—here! just at your heels!”

"Stay! Wait, I say, Steenie! What's doing yonder in Smiet's Vly?" pointing to an excited group in the marsh to their right.

"'T is a bullock they are bringing to the shambles. See, they cannot hold him!"

"Look! look! he is at large — he has gored one — the man is killed!"

"No, he is up again."

"Let them have a care! the bull is mad!"

"See now! big Claes the butcher is bringing his axe; they will kill him on the spot."

At this juncture the attention of the two eager youths was drawn to the cries of a group of terrified children who were rushing past.

"He is free! he is free!"

"He is coming after us!"

"We shall all be killed!"

Up over the grassy edge of the basin which formed the vly, and down the slope which led to the gate, the children came bounding pell-mell.

A mischievous look suddenly gleamed in the eyes of young Van Cortlandt, — a touch of pure boyishness hardly to be looked for in so strapping a youth. Spreading wide his arms, he obstructed the way of the leader of the group, a half-grown girl of thirteen or thereabouts, crying, —

"Here he comes! here — here! just at your heels!"

Screaming with fear, the poor girl, in her futile efforts to escape, darted to the right and to the left, only to find herself intercepted by her cruel tormentor, still shouting, —

"He's upon you, I say! Quick! Run! He'll catch you sure!"

"Let me go! Let me go-o-o!"

"Now — now! Look back! See, just behind you!" continued the wicked Steenie, choking with laughter.

With a frantic effort the terrified girl broke from his relaxed grasp, and rushing forward in blind haste struck her foot against a stone, and fell heavily to the ground.

Directly the sobered Steenie sprang to help her, and beheld with dismay her pale face and bleeding arm. He stood for a moment helplessly looking about, when the murmur of the little creek close by in the vly fell upon his ear. He hurried thither, soaked his handkerchief in the cold water, and, coming back, bathed the face and clumsily bound up the arm of the sufferer.

She presently revived, and gazed about in a dazed way, to find herself alone with the junker.

"There," he said, with a final turn of the bandage, "if you will but take a little care, that will stay on until you get home."

"That shall it not, nor a minute more!" cried the girl, springing to her feet and stripping off the handkerchief, which she flung disdainfully to the ground.

"But — but it will bleed again — see, 't is bleeding now!"

"I care not how much it bleeds."

"But I care. I am grieved that I hurt you. I meant not to be so rude. I pray you forgive me!"

"I never will forgive you!"

"And it would serve me right, too. Here, clear you the score now; 't is better than to wait. Here is a stick!"

"Go away!"

"Lay on! Do! I beg you, strike! Then shall

we both feel better, so that against the next time we meet —”

“Go away, I say!”

“—you will forget your grudge, and we shall be friends.”

“We shall never be friends!”

“’T is well, meantime, you know not my name, to lay up resentment against me.”

“I know it well enough.”

“What is it, then?”

“’Tis Mynheer Van Cortlandt, and I hope never to hear it again?”

“And why never again?”

“Because I hate it!” she cried with spiteful energy, as she hurried away.

II.

AMONG the score or more of ox-carts which, in a long and straggling line, lumbered out of the Landpoort shortly before noontide, on their homeward way, Rip Van Dorn's was noted as the only one quite empty; not a scrap remained of his morning's load.

Rip was the well-known tenant of Leisler's *bouwerie*, a half-mile or more beyond the walls; and although his land was not noted for its fertility, nor Rip for cunning in his craft, yet he made good all such deficiencies by his skill as a chapman. He had indeed long been acknowledged as the best huckster in the market; cajoling his women patrons by shrewd personal appeals or barefaced compliments, as best served his turn, and winning over his own sex by a beguiling waggery. Now, naturally enough, with his load disposed of, he was in a happy frame of mind, and spared not, as he strode along swinging his heavy ox-goad, to rally his less successful fellows.

"*Hola daar, Matthias!*" he shouted to the driver of the cart just before him. "Get along, or the sun 'll go down on us! But what do ye with such a load, Mat? Did ye go to market to *buy* calf's flesh? I 'll bet all 's in my pouch there's more now in your cart than in the morning."

"'Tis well Captain Leisler is not by to hear ye betting his money," countered the man promptly.

"Kill your bull, Mat, and get a ram! Ye 'll do better with sheep!"

"I wait; never fear! The good people will wear out their teeth by and by, eating half-starved beasts!"

"Or next time, for God's sake, take your calves down alive! 'Tis pity to kill the poor beasts that might better be driven back on their own hoofs!"

"What good to take live calves to market? You bellow so loud they could never be heard!" retorted the man, with good, current rustic humor.

Rip, nothing daunted, joined loudly in the laugh at his own expense.

"Jaa wel, 't is better play the calf at market than the ass on the homeward way, ei, Peterse?" to the man just behind. "There's no calf's flesh in your cart, I warrant," — casting a look back, — else there'd be no room for cabbages. Have the good people, then, lost their love for cabbages?"

"No, that have they not, for I saw all the women gaping at your head."

"Good, Peterse, good! At him again!"

"Wel, zoo! and why not? There's something inside," tapping his head; "'tis full, d'ye see, Peterse? Better a full head and an empty cart than — ye know what!"

A hoarse chorus of laughter arose from the whole group of clowns, as they cried confusedly, "Down, Peterse, — ye're down again!"

"That am I not. Give me rather an empty head than one full of wind and brande-wyn!"

Loud was the shout at this dexterous thrust at one of Rip's well-known weaknesses.

"Ei, ei, give me the brande-wyn, and keep you the empty head!" retorted Rip, as he turned off the highway upon the grass-grown road leading to his own door.

"Get a bouwerie o' your own, and then come preach to us, dominie!"

"First must I learn the trick to grow rich driving cabbages to market and back again!" rejoined Rip, with a burst of ironical laughter, prolonged so as to prevent all attempt at a reply from his late companions until he was safely out of ear-shot.

Happily none of these good friends and neighbors were thin-skinned. Such banter, it seemed, served only to put their blood into healthful circulation, and accordingly Rip drove up to his own door in undisturbed serenity.

Rip's house, although small and poor, had an air of thrift and comfort. It was a little wooden cottage covered with shingles grown silvery-gray with age, and topped by a wooden chimney blackened with soot at the mouth. Like other cottages of the time, it stood gable-end towards the highway, with the Dutch wife's inevitable tulip-bed in front, and on the side a rude stoop furnished with two stout benches, all overhung by a clambering wild-brier. A stone's throw from the door was a goose-pond, and along the garden wall a row of clumsy bee-hives.

Having unyoked and foddered his oxen, Rip, still wearing his beaming look, stalked into the house.

"Good luck again! Still good luck!" he cried in tones which made the rafters ring. "All is sold, to the last hair and feather."

His grim little huysvrouw, busied in getting the noonday meal, deigned neither greeting nor reply. Taking down from an upper shelf a big pewter platter, she gave her whole mind to wiping it, as oblivious, seemingly, of her husband as of a very fat and clumsy baby tugging at her skirts behind.

Having rubbed the already clean dish to a superfluous polish, she crossed briskly to the open fireplace, where with a long fork she critically prodded a huge piece of salt beef boiling in an iron pot. The baby, holding fast to her skirts, was dragged along at a pace far too swift for his uncertain equilibrium, and after one or two long, wavering strides toppled over sideways to the floor.

The busy mother betrayed no concern, nor cast so much as a glance behind. It was plainly an every-day mishap. The baby, indeed, without a cry or whimper, speedily straightened himself, got his bearings, and following like a crab along the floor was soon at her skirts again.

"*Hola, little vrouw! Good luck, I say! Look ye here!*" cried Rip, more lustily, as he emptied his pockets on a small table in the corner. "One good beaver, four strings of white seawant, two of black, a half-dozen guilders, and more than two handfuls of stuyvers."

Pulling the crane bearing the heavy pot out over the hearth-stone and balancing the platter in her left hand, Vrouw Van Dorn, with a dexterous movement, fished out the meat, and stood watching the greasy liquor drain back into the pot without betraying by so much as the quiver of an eyelash any interest in her good man's intelligence.

"Let go! let go, Ripse! Mother put baby in the fire and burn him up!"

Undeterred by this terrible threat, the persistent Ripse kept tugging to raise his ponderous bulk from the floor, rendering very difficult his mother's management of the heavy platter.

"Mother whip Ripse — slap! slap! slap!"

"Tryntje, I say!" broke in Rip senior, coming up in a rollicking manner and folding his spouse in a voluminous embrace, regardless of meat and platter. "Come, my dear! Come glad your eyes with the sight yonder!"

"Go away!" said the little woman curtly.

"'Away,' says she; she sends away her own man!"

Replying only by a sniff to this bit of sentiment, Vrouw Van Dorn proceeded to bring forth from the same pot two dripping cabbages, dump them on the platter to garnish the meat, and carry the whole to the table, dragging the tottering Ripse behind her.

"Come! do you hear? Come here, I say!" persisted her husband.

Releasing her petticoats from the dimpled clutch of Ripse, and substituting by way of consolation a piece of boiled beef to suck, Vrouw Van Dorn, with a resigned air, stalked to the corner and gazed at the treasure.

"What think you now?"

"Huh!"

"Ei?"

"T 'is much good — all that!"

"Why not?"

"It goes to stuff Mynheer's pocket."

"The bouwerie is his; he takes no more than his own."

"Huh!"

"Nor so much. He is a good landlord, — he tosses me back always a guilder or two for the cub yonder."

"Zoo? Come here, Ripse! Show mother where keep you all these guilders the good Mynheer sends!"

cried the dame ironically to the baby, who came creeping towards them.

" 'T is easy to see, my dear," went on Rip, deaf to the interruption, "you have not yet learned to love Mynheer."

"No."

"Wait, then! Wait only! It will come. He loves you already; he asks always for my vrouw."

"Huh!"

"He is a good man, he has a big heart. He tries always to do the right."

Vrouw Van Dorn maintained a stony silence.

"Who was so kind when Ripse was sick?"

"Vrouw Leisler is not Mynheer."

"And the children, — Jacob?"

"The junker is well enough."

"And Mary?"

"I say nothing against her."

"And Hester?"

"She is Catalina's friend."

"Zoo? 'T is enough. Friend to Catalina, the dear Catalina! Poor Hester! nothing by yourself; but no matter, — you have Catalina for a friend."

Vrouw Van Dorn listened with grim composure to this feeble raillery.

"What makes so dear to you the blackamoor's child?"

"I had her always in my arms from the hour she was born —"

"What a pity you had not me always in arms!" interposed Rip, whimsically.

"She loves me, that one, better than the mother."

"And you love her better again than that. Poor Ripse and me! we must live without love, — ei,

schelmje?" he cried, catching up the baby and tossing him again and again into the air, shaking and mauling him at every descent as though he had been made of putty.

This, however, was plainly a favorite exercise with the infant, who manifested his delight by certain breathless and inarticulate outcries. Altogether the two were having a truly uproarious time, when Tryntje, who meanwhile had finished spreading her board by the addition of some bread, butter, cheese, curds prepared with rennet, and a tankard of home-brewed beer, interrupted them with, "Come, it is ready! Come and eat!"

"What does mother to Ripse?" asked the father, while the young one waited for another toss.

Unfolding his begrimmed little hands from his father's grasp, the child brought them together with a resounding smack, which sent the father off into a paroxysm of laughter.

"Come, I say; the meat gets cold!"

Obedient to this peremptory summons, Rip returned the baby to his underfoot domain, and placed himself, nothing loath, at the board.

"Jaa wel," he continued, with a mouth full of beef and cabbage, returning to the subject of his morning's gains, "'t is Mynheer's land, and he must have his share."

"And what is left?"

"This is left," pointing to the beef and cabbage, "and this," taking up the skirt of his smock, "and — and there will be a few pieces for your stocking, mayhap."

"Few enough!"

"'T is the way to grow rich," gasped Rip, setting

down the pewter mug after a breathless draught of beer, and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "One by one makes a hundred."

"It makes not a hundred here —"

"Humph — m-m," interposed Rip, recognizing a storm signal. "Saw ye ever, Tryntje, a finer beaver?"

"It makes nothing at all nor ever will, while you waste fair daylight and —"

"See! Stroke it with your own hand," he continued, in precipitation, picking up the skin from the floor and tossing it across to his kindling vrouw.

"—and spend all we get at Annekin Litschoe's pot-house."

"'Tis worth an English guinea, every stuyver of it."

"Ye heed me well enough, for all your clatter!"

"What now is the matter?" opening his eyes in feigned surprise.

Tryntje tossed her head in contempt at the artifice.

"Annekin, say ye? Annekin is an honest, hard-working vrouw, and give and take is fair dealing."

"Never a doubt, and ye'll be giving and she taking till all is gone."

"Does she not buy her hoof-kaas of ye?"

"Where is my gain?"

"And many a fat pullet and basket of eggs?"

"How grow we rich on that when you pour down the whole and more in her brande-wyn —"

"Heaven help us! What is like a vrouw's tongue! But, Tryntje —"

"—and call all the idlers in the tap-room to drink at your cost?"

"Can a man drink by himself?"

"Then leave drinking alone."

"Ei, ei, hear her! Not to drink at all! To live and not to drink! Am I not to eat, too! Am I to die, then?"

"Jaa — jaa — jaa! 'T is better than wear out the life tilling Mynheer Leisler's bouwerie."

"Zoo! And what then would you have?"

"A bouwerie of our own."

"Hola! hear the mother, junker! Hear her talk!" cried Rip, rising and catching up the expectant infant. "She would be a high-mightiness! A bouwerie of our own! Hark, Ripse, while I whisper in your ear; the poor mother is crazy."

With a snort of disdain Tryntje rose from the table, and began clearing away the dishes.

"Zoo! zoo! zoo!" muttered Rip, collecting his treasure and passing out of the house, "the poor mother is crazy. A bouwerie of our own, — 't is good!"

By a prodigious clatter of her pewter trenchers and platters Tryntje quite drowned her husband's raillery, nor did she deign any answer when after a time he summoned her in good earnest.

"Tryntje! hola, Tryntje, I say! look out for the junker! I must away now to settle accounts with Captain Leisler."

Having given due warning, Rip put the infant down upon the grass, and took a short cut across the fields on his way to the Landpoort.

The adventurous baby, meantime, left to his own devices, rashly invaded the neighboring green, where a flock of geese were feeding. A warlike old gander at once set upon the innocent intruder, threw him down, and pecked and flapped his face severely.

In answer to Ripse's lusty howls, Tryntje came flying from the house. Seizing the irate bird by its long neck, she dragged it, squawking and fluttering, to the neighboring wood-pile, where with one vigorous blow of the axe she struck off its head, and hurrying back half-smothered her bawling infant with caresses.

III.

THE Magde Paetje, now Maiden's Lane, was once a pretty dingle, where the Dutch wives and maids went to wash and bleach their linen in the cold, clear waters of a brook which rippled and bubbled along between the hills on its way to the East River.

Just now, swollen by the melting of the snow, the brook filled the air with its roarings, the willows along its borders were silvery with catkins, while the southern hill-slopes gave promise of liverwort and saxifrage.

Up this little valley, quite neglectful of Cornelis and his purposed sport, Steenie hastened with bounding step; picking his way over the spongy turf, crossing the brawling brook upon a fallen log, keeping all the time a watchful eye upon the bobbing red hood which appeared and disappeared among the copses and thickets dotting the hillside, where its busy owner had come a-Maying.

The persistence with which the back of the hood was kept turned to the south as the young man drew near, and the conscious flush with which he was welcomed, argued that his approach had not been unnoted.

"What brings you to the Magde Paetje so early? It cannot be for flowers."

"How know you that?"

"I never heard men cared for them," said the

young woman, continuing her search with affected indifference.

"I care not for all sorts myself," returned the panting Steenie, seating himself upon a neighboring log and casting off his broad-brimmed hat.

"What sort is your favorite?"

"A fair red flower."

Feigning dulness, the girl answered demurely, —

"There is no such now a-bloom."

"Surely" — more significantly — "I thought I saw one hereabouts."

Covert gratification leaked out from guarded eyes and mouth, and overran the tell-tale face of the listener.

"You must needs be always jesting."

"Where is the jest?"

"To liken my old hood to a flower."

"What if it seem to my fancy a flower?"

"Then shall I beg my mother for leave to give it to you for a keepsake," said the owner of the hood, laughing.

"Do!"

"You need not fear I shall be so silly."

"My only fear is you may not."

"You are going a-fishing!"

"Who told you?"

"The line in your hand."

"It shall tell no more lies," thrusting the fishing-gear into his wide-flapped pocket.

"But why do you not go?" asked the young woman, with transparent coquetry.

"I bethought me you might need help."

"And is this the way you would help?"

"Oh, there is no haste; 't is early yet. Sit you down till I catch my breath; see, here is a dry place,"

he said, making room upon the log where he was sitting.

"I have not time to waste," she objected, taking the seat, however, with sweet, feminine inconsistency.

"But I must needs have some teaching; how can I be of any help otherwise? What have you here? Is it for this I am to search?" he continued, boldly pulling some flowers from her apron, and edging nearer under pretence of examining them.

"Yes."

"Is this all your store?"

"Yes, and a very fair store, too. These are not easy to find, I warn you; they hide themselves cunningly away, and you must thrust aside the leaves and look sharp to get them."

"'Tis a winsome flower," said the young man, holding up one of the tiny purple-streaked bells.

"Yes, and they are not over-plentiful."

"'Tis that, mayhap, makes their worth; things too common do not stir our longing."

"No more should things too precious, for they are often set at a price beyond our reach."

"I pray that may not hold true with what is now most precious to me!" burst forth the junker with sudden gravity, and an emphasis made more impressive by a moment's forethought.

Thereafter neither spoke for a space. The girl moved uneasily in her seat, and passed the flowers aimlessly from hand to hand.

Her companion's behavior was most disconcerting. It was as if his eyes had been set as sentinels upon her while his wits had gone wandering; he simply sat and stared. Oppressed by the prolonged silence, she at last faltered, —

"How green the hills are yonder on Staaten Island!"

Perhaps he thought it not worth while to answer a speech of so little pertinence. As he did not, she fell to toying again with the flowers.

"Hester," he at length broke out, "do you remember, long ago, we went one day to get water-lilies at the Kolch?"

"When we were children?"

He nodded.

"And you pulled me out when I fell into the pool?"

"You have not forgotten it?" he asked, eagerly.

"No; I remember because I was so affrighted."

"Oh, humph!" The gladness visibly faded from his eyes, and only after a long pause he added, in an undertone, "I was not affrighted, and yet I remember."

"Because you did a brave thing."

"I did not know it was a brave thing," he retorted, impatiently.

She looked puzzled.

"Hester," he said suddenly, "let us go back there!"

"To childhood again?" she asked, with an embarrassed laugh.

"To the Kolch."

"Now?"

"Yes; 't is but a few minutes' walk."

"And then you can fish," she said, with make-believe innocence.

But he was not in the mood for her dull little maidenly wiles, pretty as they were. He answered gravely and half frowning, —

"I shall not fish."

She looked at the flowers in her lap as though in

search of another objection. He forestalled her directly.

"We will gather some more on the way."

Thereupon he reached forth his hand imperatively; she placed her own in it without further demur. Turning northward, they crossed some intervening fields, she perversely keeping him dancing hither and thither in a vain search for the flowers which she well knew could not be found.

Presently they came to the Kolch, or Collect, a beautiful pond quite surrounded by green hills, covering the spot where now stands the gloomy prison of the Tombs.

Following a cow-path, they soon reached the water's edge, where Steenie, taking his bearings, guided his companion along the shore to a rocky point which jutted out to some distance into the deep water.

"See, here 't is!" he cried, dragging himself up the steep slope, and reaching back a helpful hand to his companion. "'T was here you stood, and I quite out upon the point yonder."

Hester sat down upon the rock, and threw back her hood, showing her cheeks glowing with the exercise.

"Is it indeed here? The rock looks not so high nor the water so deep as I remember."

"'T is because childhood is a dream where all is big or miraculous," he said, throwing himself on the ground at her feet.

"It remains a miracle still that I was not drowned," studying the spot as she spoke.

"And a mercy, too — perhaps."

The last word came like a lagging thought involuntarily verbalized.

"I hope that is meant more graciously than it sounds," she commented, half-laughing.

"I had no thought of being gracious or otherwise. I was only thinking of what might be."

"I trust 't is not a cause for repentance with you that you saved my life?"

"It may be."

She sat with a half-smile, as if awaiting a jest.

"It may be a blessing, and it may be a curse," he said suddenly and with emphasis.

"Heaven be good to us!" she cried, tranquilly.

"Will it not be a curse if we are to be separated in the end, if you are forbidden to hold converse with me, if you are made to give me up, to see me no more?" he asked vehemently.

Except for a slight and natural reddening of the cheeks, caused by this precipitation of the issue of their long courtship, her composure remained unshaken, her cool Dutch blood held its course unquickened, and her mild blue eyes encountered with steadiness his ardent gaze.

"You know my family," he went on; "you know your own father and their present relations, — what likelihood is there that they will ever consent? And if they do not consent, what are we to do?"

She listened to him gravely enough now, all coquetry and wiles laid aside. She surrendered her hands to his passionate hold; she acquiesced without protest in the position he took, as the natural and proper culmination of what had gone before. She was happy, too, it was plain, but without transport. She sat in serene content with the moment. Her lover's looks and tones so filled her fancy as to leave no room for the gloomy auguries he was so busily

marshalling. Withal she may have been a little dazed at the sudden development of the climax or by the effort to follow his swiftly succeeding words and emotions.

"One thing they cannot do!" he went on impetuously; "they cannot help our being faithful to each other!"

She pressed his hand, in answer to the question in his eyes.

"But they will make trouble for us; prepare for that,—have a care for that! Well I know them. They will make hindrances enough, never fear, for us; they will be for making another match for you."

She shook her head and smiled.

That smile, brimful of confidence, of security, of deep-going fidelity, outweighed a hundred verbal protests. It went straight to his heart, a doubt-dispelling balm. With an eloquent look of gratitude he went on:—

"Ah, sweetheart, hold to that and we are safe! Never heed them, never fear them. They can do nothing so we but stand fast by one another."

She pressed his hand again, as if no other answer were needed. But he craved a more definite pledge.

"Come, pipe up, little bird! Where is your voice? I am hungering for a note of it. What say you, ei? Promise me now that whatever they do you will cleave the closer to me."

"I promise," she said, demurely.

Thereupon he seized her rapturously in his arms, and her face suffered a total eclipse for several moments.

"Stay!" he said presently. "Why not bind ourselves after the old fashion?"

Whereupon, taking a gold piece from his pocket, with the aid of his hunting-knife and a heavy stone he cut it in two.

"See, this is my pocket-piece! I give you half. Never part with it, Hester, whatever comes!"

"That will I not, save to you yourself," she answered firmly.

Directly her face suffered another and a longer eclipse.

"Then will you keep it forever?"

They were interrupted by a gabble of approaching voices. A group of boys with fishing-tackle had come to take possession of the point on which they were seated.

IV.

COME, let us go," said Hester, as the intruders drew near.

"So soon?"

"See yonder, how late it grows!" pointing to the shadow of a neighboring tree.

"But your flowers!"

"There is no time for them now."

"Never mind. You shall have them to-morrow. We will go in my ketch to Staaten Island, where there is a great store of all sorts."

"Mother will never give me leave to go so far save in older company."

"Let us have company, then."

"We might mayhap get Tryntje."

"Tryntje?"

"The huysvrouw of Rip Van Dorn, who tills my father's bouwerie above the Landpoort."

"Good!"

"And Catalina."

"Van Dorn?"

"Not she," laughing. "Well for you she hears not that! Vrouw Van Dorn was her nurse and foster-mother. She is Catalina Staats, my dearest friend; daughter of the worshipful Dr. Staats."

"He that married the Eastern princess they call the begum?"

"Yes, and not long ago fetched her hither from India to live."

"Catalina! I wonder if 't is not the fiery little elf I met this morning."

"What was she like?"

"Like nothing else I ever saw."

"Oh, then, 't was she!"

"With big black eyes, a skin like smoked pearl, and hair not to be told from flax."

"Yes; Dutch and Indian, see you, half and half, her father and mother mixed."

"Get her, — get her, by all means! 'T would be sport to have the little wild-cat, though she might scratch and bite; and as for Vrouw Van Dorn, let us go now and make sure of her."

"The bouwerie is near by; we may take it on the way home. But I warn you I am no great favorite there, and she may not come at a bidding."

Turning southward, they followed a grass-path to the highway, which in a short time brought them to Rip's cottage. About to knock at the door, they were stayed by a sound from within.

"Somebody is in pain," suggested Steenie.

"No, no," whispered Hester, stifling a laugh; "'tis Tryntje singing."

"Never! 'T is one in mortal agony, that!"

"Sh-h! Come here!"

Tiptoeing along the path, with no great delicacy they peeped in at the window.

Before them in a high-backed chair, sat Vrouw Van Dorn, with one knee thrown across the other, balancing upon her outstretched foot the ponderous Ripse, while in a strident and raucous voice she sang the following ditty: —

"Trip a trop a tronjes,
De varkens in de boonjes,

De koejes in de klaver,
De paarden in de haver,
De eenjes in de water-plass,
So groot myn kleine Ripse was ! ”

As she reached his name, with a vigorous kick she sent high in air the delighted infant, who came down each time gurgling and choking with hysterical laughter. In strong contrast with the bacchanalian air of the babe was the severe aspect of the mother, who nevertheless went on patiently repeating a gymnastic exercise which might well have taxed the strength of a man. Stepping back to the door, Hester, after a warning cough, lifted the latch and went in.

“ Good-day to you, Tryntje ! ”

The vrouw, as if ashamed at being detected in such a display of maternal weakness, put Ripse straightway upon the floor, rose, and stiffly curtsied.

“ ’T is a fine day.”

“ Yes.”

“ I hope you are well.”

“ Yes.”

“ My mother was greatly obliged for the hoof-kaas you sent the other day by Rip.”

“ I am glad to suit her — Go away, Ripse ! ” heading off the creeping young one from an attack upon the stranger by a swiftly protruded foot. “ Sit you down, pray ! ”

“ Ahem ! ” coughed Hester, her skirmishing ammunition nearly exhausted. “ Your tulip-bed is truly a wonder.”

“ It is nothing.”

“ You — er — we seldom see you in town these days,” continued the visitor, casting about cautiously for some fit introduction of her subject.

"'T is that one," pointing to the baby.

"So! I thought not of him. Have you — ahem — er — seen Catalina of late?"

"Yes; she comes often."

The little huysvrouw's bolt-upright attitude, while profoundly respectful, contributed little towards reassuring the visitor. Meantime the latter showed few resources of diplomacy. In the awkward pause Steenie's form darkening the doorway was suggestively welcome.

"I have brought with me Mynheer Van Cortlandt; we are on our homeward way from the Kolch."

"Good-day to you, vrouw!" said Steenie, seating himself in the nearest chair with homespun familiarity. "I am happy to make your acquaintance. I see you have a fine lump of a boy yonder. Come, you rogue, — come to me!"

Dislodged from her defences by this flank attack of the ingratiating stranger, Tryntje flushed with pleasure at the compliment, and casting an admiring glance at the tall junker, she muttered some incoherent disclaimer.

Noting with gratitude their first advantage, Hester lost not a moment in following it up. "I promised Mynheer Van Cortlandt you would give him a drink of buttermilk."

This was a masterly touch, and put them a long stride onward.

"That I will, and most welcome!" cried Tryntje, bristling in a moment with activity.

Taking her best pewter tankard from the shelf, she plunged into the cellar, and presently brought it back filled with foaming sweet buttermilk. Going next to the pantry, she produced a couple of mugs and a

heaped-up plate of cakes, murmuring as she set forth her treat,—

“If you had but sent me warning!”

“A year’s warning could not have found you better prepared. Come, junker!” and lifting the baby to his knee, Steenie placed himself at the table. “Where are you, Hester? Make haste if you would get your share.”

“Oh, I knew well nobody makes olykoeks like Tryntje.”

The praise of the food demanded by etiquette was received without elation by their hostess, who indeed was at the moment far more interested in the matter of Ripse’s toilet.

With great uneasiness she beheld him in such close proximity to the elegant stranger. Accordingly, making some pretext for taking him, she employed the interval while her guests were at their luncheon in plying the wash-rag and comb, to such good effect that Cinderella suffered no greater transformation at the hands of the fairy godmother.

Hester presently brushed the crumbs from her lap, and went to the window.

“Who would think of seeing the water from here?” she cried, again getting on the track of her object.

“You may see the masts of the ketches as they go sailing along. Were you ever on the sea, Tryntje?”

“Yes, as I came hither on the ship.”

“It makes you not qualmish, then?”

“No.”

“What would I give to cross the sea! Did you find it sport?”

“I was like a fool over it.”

“A sail in the harbor is nothing to crossing the

sea, but 't would be better than nothing, surely," said Hester, cautiously advancing.

Tryntje listened with the feeble and unattached interest she might have lent to one talking of trips to the moon.

"A ketch might prove a poor matter after a big ship."

"'T was old times then," sighed the dame, absently, as with attention fixed upon the table she watched to see that Steenie was kept supplied; "there is no chance for such fooling now."

"See your mistake; here is a chance already. Mynheer and I go sailing to Staaten Island to-morrow; you shall go with us."

Tryntje only stared; this sudden proposal, so without motive or preliminary, was very perplexing. She covered her embarrassment by darting forward and pouring another mug of buttermilk for Steenie, despite his emphatic protest.

"What say you?" demanded Hester, waiting patiently for an answer.

"You are most kind; 't is a great honor, — I thank you much."

"Then you will go?"

"No," passing her stiff little hand with a disconcerted movement over her lips, as if to wipe away the effect of her ungracious refusal.

"What hinders you?"

"That one," pointing to the baby.

"We will take him too."

Tryntje shook her head.

"What harm can come to him? The sea air is wholesome; 't will do him good, — 't will give you a holiday. Come, Tryntje, such chances are not forthcoming every day; you will go?"

"No."

"But why not, please you?"

"I — he — the father will be afraid," stammered the dame, driven to the wall for an answer.

"Rip afraid? Not he! I will answer for him."

Tryntje, however, stood stubbornly upon the defence. Her visitor showed no less resources in the attack.

"'T is a short course, mind you; only to Staaten Island."

The dame still continued to emphasize every fresh argument by a prompt negation.

"We may be back for dinner."

A head-shake.

"There is no danger."

Another head-shake.

"'T is Mynheer's own ketch."

A third.

"And he himself is to sail it."

Another yet.

With a growing look of persistence in her cool blue eyes, Hester paused a moment to cast about for a change of tactics. Opportunely Steenie came up, with Ripse on his arm.

With one stroke of unswerving directness he stultified all Hester's laborious circumlocution.

"I hope, vrouw, you will oblige us. 'T is for my pleasure. I would take Hester for a sail, and her mother will be better content that some discreet person is of the company."

This speech might as well have been accompanied by an overt wink, so meaning was the glance the junker fixed upon his listener.

In a trice she understood. Few women could have resisted such an appeal. Tryntje was not one of

them. Flattered and disarmed, she showed instant signs of relenting.

"And Catalina," put in Hester for a clincher, — "Catalina is to go too."

But her sympathies were aroused, and Tryntje needed no more urging.

"Mind you," continued Hester, turning upon the step as they were about to set forth, "I have not yet my mother's consent, but she cannot refuse when she knows you are to be with us; and so if you have no word from me, be in waiting at the dock as soon as may be after the opening of the gates."

"And bring this rogue with you," added Steenie, giving Ripse a parting toss.

A smile which contorted for a moment the dame's face was promptly and violently repressed, as if she were ashamed of such weakness.

"'T is settled, then. Come, Hester! Good-by, vrouw!"

The junker had builded better than he knew; by one happy stroke he had gained an ally whose value the happy pair little suspected, as they marched rollicking away.

And well for them they did not.

V.

IT is still market-day ; the fort bell has not yet rung its curfew peal. Before the door of a small shop in Winckel Street sits a middle-aged burgher. The man is not comely, he is not agreeable looking, but he fixes attention. It would be hard to account for the instant and strong impression his personality creates, — an impression which provokes while it baffles analysis. One point soon becomes clear ; the result of the whole outgiving of the man, so far as the physical may reveal the moral, is presently recognized in an atmosphere of power. Details here may not be neglected, — a burly, robust figure, a head bristling with energy, harsh features, a severe aspect, are points each and all necessary to a clear realization of his person. Significant, too, is his evident contempt for small decencies ; his chin is rough with a two days' beard, his long hair is uncombed, his nails are black, his linen is soiled, his coarse hose are ill-gartered, his breeches show divers rents, and his threadbare doublet is splashed with grease ; for all that, he has an air of entire respectability.

A certain strong odor from the shop proclaims the man's calling, — he is a liquor dealer. In fact, he is at this very minute awaiting the arrival of an invoice of foreign wine now unloading in the dock.

As he sits waiting and smoking, there comes along the street a tall figure with shambling gait, and stops before him.

"Well?" grunts the sitter, with a sharp interrogative accent.

"I am h-here — ye see."

"Ye come with the rent?"

"Look at this!" shaking a pouch.

"Ye are late."

"'T is mar-market day."

"Ye found time to go to Vrouw Litschoe's."

"Ei?"

"Ye 're drunk again —"

"Not I!"

"— and no wonder, with the damned dregs and lees ye get yonder."

"I had but a drop passing the door; 't is all — 't is —"

"Give me the money."

"Here — here 't is, all safe for ye!" producing it from his pouch.

"'T is not enough."

"Ei?"

"Here is wanting four strings of seawant yet."

"So?" with a blank stare.

"The old story, — ye spent it at the pot-house, ye drunken dog! But ye shall make up the lack, mark ye, — every stayver of it!"

Mumblin' and fumblyin' in his pocket, the tenant affected a tipsy astonishment.

"What gave ye to your vrouw of your gains at the market?"

"Ei?"

"What had the vrouw from ye, I say, to keep soul and body together?"

"Tryntje? N-never ye fear for her! She — hic — gets ever all that 's left."

“So! They ’ll not grow fat, she and the brat, this time. Get home with ye, and mark my words; keep clear of Vrouw Litschoe, or I ’ll have ye put into the stocks!”

Calling a bareheaded apprentice from the shop, as his crestfallen tenant staggered away, the landlord growled, —

“Go get ye after yonder fool and see him safe home to the bouwerie; and, Claes, stay! Come here!” He paused, and regarded with calculating eye the treasure in his lap, from which he picked up presently two strings of seawant, and added, “Hand you this to the little vrouw yonder, on the sly, and whisper there is no need to pay it back.”

As the apprentice hastens after the tipsy Rip, Mynheer sees on the other side his expected load of wine approaching. A heavy ox-cart tugs up the muddy street, and after much shouting on the part of the driver and some brutal clubbing of the patient oxen, it is at last duly backed up before the shop-door. A gang-plank is then adjusted, and the huge butts and casks are rolled down and disposed so as completely to fill the narrow space between the street and the building, except that part occupied by Mynheer and his wooden bench.

Mynheer looks on in silence, save for bawling out now and then some direction to the slaves who are handling the casks, or grunting assent to the idle comments of his neighbors, who have gathered to witness the unloading.

The cart being driven away the diversion is ended, and these worthy trades-folk fall back upon the staple topics of the day for gossip.

“What think you, neighbor Leisler, of these stories

from over the water?" asked the bareheaded haberdasher from next door, taking a seat on the bench.

"Stories?" echoed the grocer, chewing a piece of African ginger, and scraping his bedaubed leather apron with a cheese-knife.

"That the Prince of Orange has invaded England and King James is thrust off the throne," explained the haberdasher, before Mynheer could empty his mouth of smoke.

"Poh! 'T is an old granny's tale," put in a Scotch tobacconist, whose shop was close at hand.

"As Christ lives, it is the truth!" cried Leisler, bringing his heavy fist down upon the bench.

"Fudge! I say the English are not a folk to be put down by a handful of Dutchmen."

"Who talks of putting down? 'T is the British themselves; they were sick of the Stuart's Popish plots."

"Have a care, Mynheer Leisler!"

"Bah! I stand by my words. They called in Prince William because the old Romish serpent was winding them in his coils."

"What avails knocking down the father to set up the daughter?"

"They are as different as light from dark. Mary is no Papist; the prince would as soon take a viper to his bed."

"But 't is a revolution you talk of," continued the Scotchman.

"What then? 'T is time, God knows, for a revolution when the king begins to plot with the Pope and the French against his own."

"Trim your tongue, Master Leisler! 'T is rank treason you're talking."

Leisler knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and gave a snort of defiance.

"If this tale prove false," persisted the Scotchman, "as many another has, you may answer for it with your head."

"I'll answer it with sword and arquebuse, come who will to the reckoning."

"And what ground is there for all this pother? Tell me that."

"Was not an honest man cast into jail in Boston t'other day by yonder beast Andros —"

"Sh-h!"

"Fie!"

"Hush, man! are you mad?" There was a sibilant chorus of protestation.

"—for showing a copy of the prince's own declaration?" persisted Leisler.

"Whence had he it?"

"Fetched by himself from England, and he that moment landed from the ship."

"And because some idle fellow shows a paper, call you that proof the throne of England is overturned?"

"How if it be stamped with the great seal?"

"Eh?"

"What say you?"

The suggestion caused a sensation,—the little group gathered closer about the bold speaker; others, passing, attracted by the loud voice, joined the circle, which soon swelled to a dozen or more interested listeners.

"What is more," went on Leisler, "the great Dr. Mather himself sent over an account of the whole matter. But I waste my time talking to blind men who cannot see, to deaf men who will not hear, and

to fools who cannot understand what goes on. I tell you," he concluded, sternly, "when the air has been so long time full of thunder, 't is time for the lightning."

"But *we* are safe, at any rate," chimed in the official inviter-to-funerals, who had just joined the crowd; "'t will hardly reach over here."

"Will it not? Ugh!" cried Leisler, with an ominous snort.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"There will be violence here, think you?"

"But we are good Protestants."

"Tell us your mind, Captain Leisler!"

"Are there not Papists holding office here?" roared Leisler, in a thundering voice; "boldly and shamelessly keeping themselves in high places when their master is thrown down?"

"Sh-h!"

"Speak softly, captain!"

"Have a care!"

"Who are those in authority, and what are they doing?" pursued Leisler, ignoring the cautions whispered in his ear. "Why is not William proclaimed, since he is king?"

A feeble murmur ran through the crowd, and the listeners looked at one another in doubt.

"Why, indeed?" cried a bold-looking man, elbowing his way towards the bench. "How will the new king take such backwardness?"

"Think not that is all," went on Leisler. "Those rascally Papists are plotting to seize the government and make us into a Catholic province; then they will invite the old king over, and set up a Catholic kingdom here in the New World."

The Scotchman alone dared sneer at this suggestion, but he was speedily silenced by the growing applause.

"The French devils in Canada are stirring up the savages this very minute to help on the plot, and as soon as James lands on these shores they will swoop down and burn our houses and butcher our children, if we go not over to the Papists."

"Right, captain, right! You have hit it. Some say the savages are already on the march."

"What measures are taken here against them? What are they doing, — the governor, the mayor, and the worshipful councillors yonder at the Stadthuys?"

"Ay, ay! tell us that!" echoed the bold-faced man.

"Hatching treason," answered Leisler, bluntly.

"Fie! they are no more Papists than you!" cried the Scotchman.

"Is not Nicholson a 'Piscopal?"

"And if he be?"

"I would rather be an out-and-out Papist than a make-believe," said Leisler's adherent.

"Where is the treason in that?" put in the Scotchman again. "Look out, my masters, how you play with gunpowder! A fire is easier set going than put out."

"Have they not seized upon the public money and locked it up in the fort?" went on Leisler, with increasing vehemence. "'T is seized for King James! 'T is the people's money, — 't is our money; will ye have it given to a Papist?"

A loud cry of protestation arose from excited bystanders.

"'T is ours, I say; it came from the sweat of our faces, and we will have it back!" pursued Leisler,

clinch his fist and glancing ominously towards the fort.

At this moment a hurried footstep was heard coming down the street. The new-comer was recognized and hailed by many of the group.

"Hola, Stoll!"

"What now, Joost?"

"One might think his father had died and left him an heir."

"Make way! Make way! Where's the captain?"

"Here! Here!"

"The devil breaks loose — ugh! ugh! Everything goes to pieces — ugh! ugh! All the country is up in arms."

"Have done with your grunting, and tell your story like a Christian."

"My — my wind is gone —"

"Damn your wind! What is your news?"

"The Bostoneers have uprisen and — and laid the governor by the heels and —"

"Andros?"

"The old Turk yonder that kept the people down."

"God!" exclaimed Leisler, springing to his feet in uncontrollable excitement.

"The people — ugh! — have cast him into prison — and — and —"

"Go on!" cried Leisler, fiercely. "Go on, I say!"

"— and set up the old governor —"

"Yes, and then?"

"They choose a committee to carry on the business."

"Who told you this?"

"An express is just come to the Stadthuys, most dead with haste; he says the whole country follows after Boston, — Plymouth, Rhode Island, Connecticut,

all ; they have all cast down the Papists and up with King William."

Leisler glared at the man for a moment, and said no more. He sat down upon the bench, with elbows on his knees, and deeply pondered this startling news, while the others gabbled and chattered about the panting Stoll.

In the midst of the confusion a striking-looking person quietly turned the corner of the street from the direction of the fort, and slowly approached the spot, — a small, slender woman, with a complexion as dark as a mulatto's, but with features of the most delicate type, and a very marked air of high-breeding and dignity. Her dress was as extraordinary as her person. Both in fashion and in fabric it was notably different from that in vogue among the Dutch women of the period. Over her head was draped a scarf of rich embroidery wrought in colors, beneath which gleamed another head-covering of the finest lawn. Across her low forehead hung a thin plate of beaten gold set in gems. Wrapped about her shoulders was a rare Indian shawl which fell almost to her feet, displaying as she walked a white skirt of the softest cashmere. She was accompanied by two negro slaves, one following, and the other going before to secure a passage and inspire respect.

As she approached the noisy group before Leisler's door, some of those in the outer circle made a movement to afford her passage.

"Make way !"

"Stand aside !"

"Make room ! Do you hear, junkers ?"

"'T is her mightiness !"

"The begum !"



"She lifted her veil."

The lady, brought to a standstill, hastily drew a veil across her face as she noted the gaze of the group fixed upon her. All stepped aside to make room for her, — all save a group of three or four directly about Leisler.

“Do you hear, there?” bawled out the Scotchman. “Are your ears stuffed with wool? Make room for the lady.”

“Who is it calls?”

“Bestir yourselves, I say, and let the worshipful lady pass!”

With much grumbling, the others climbed the casks or stepped into the shop, but the doughty captain kept his seat. “Damn the worshipful lady, and all other worshipfuls! There’ll be no more worshipfuls here! I’ll give way to no one before my own shop!”

Turning his eyes as the others moved aside, and recognizing the person for whom so imperative a demand had been made, he went on with a fresh access of rage: “What, Staats’ huysvrouw? Make way for Staats’ blackamoor? Not I! Let her take the street! There’ll be no more worshipful masters and highmightinesses in this land, thank God! Let her take the street, I say! I have better-looking wenches in my kitchen.”

The woman started; she lifted her veil, and gazed steadily at Leisler, as if to identify the man and realize his meaning. More impressive than any contortion of feature or outburst of passion was the suppressed look of profound outrage in the woman’s face, and the parting glance she cast at her aggressor was sinister in its deep resentment.

Motioning to her slaves, she turned without a word, and disappeared in the direction whence she had come.

VI.

RETURNING from their visit to Tryntje, Steenie and Hester entered the town by way of the Landpoort, and sauntered down Broadway. Coming near the fort, they found the green filled with an excited crowd.

"What is it?" asked Hester, reluctantly admitting any distraction in her new happiness.

"Wait, and I will bring you word."

"Never mind. What matters it?"

But leaving her on the corner of Petticoat Lane, Steenie had already darted across to mingle with the throng.

Hester gazed after him with wistful eyes, sitting down meanwhile on a wayside boulder to beguile the time. It was not long. He came back almost directly with an explanation.

"'Tis nothing. Those noisy train-bands are discontent. You know, since this late news came from abroad, they have been set to guard the town."

"Yes; my father is one of the captains, and he has to take his turn."

"Well and good. But last night, Lieutenant Cuyler, one of De Peyster's men, took upon him to set a guard at the sally-port without leave of the lieutenant-governor, who, when he heard of it, called the rascal up and had like to have broken his head with a pistol; and served him right, too."

"To be sure, he was very bold," said Hester, absently, as she fastened a knot of flowers in her lover's button-hole.

"And now these grimy fellows would make a stir about it. 'Let them stick to their shops, and leave the guidance of public matters to their betters,' says my father, and he should know. I will go tell him of this uproar, and beg him send a file of soldiers to drive these greasy fellows back to their work."

At this moment the bell in the fort sounded. Trained to the clockwork regularity of a Dutch household, the junker dropped the subject in mid-air, and involuntarily turned his face homeward.

"Let us mend our pace, or we shall be late."

But Hester, defiant even of discipline in her present bliss, loitered on the way, lengthening out every remaining inch of the distance.

Arrived at the corner of the Strand, they stopped and gazed at each other; it was their first parting. Unhappily it was broad daylight and there were passers in the street.

"Must you go?" he asked, holding both her hands.

She answered by a look which acknowledged no compulsion.

"Think what a sweet day 't will be to-morrow at Staaten Island!" he said, by way of lessening the pang.

"But — till then?"

"I must overhaul my ketch this evening while the light holds."

The excuse was plainly not accepted as sufficient.

"If we are to go — it must needs be repaired —"

Still with swaying hands clasped tightly in his, Hester would not, by word or look, make herself an accomplice in the impending separation. What mor-

tal man could resist such sweet stubbornness? The enraptured junker, catching her in his arms, kissed her again and again, careless of consequences.

Overwhelmed with shamefacedness, she broke from him and ran away.

"Stay! Hester — Hester, I will go with you!"

"But if we are seen — No, you must not."

Realizing the wisdom of this caution, he watched her out of sight along the winding street, and heaving a big sigh turned to go home, when plump upon him, around a neighboring corner, came his young acquaintance of Smiet's Vly. Filled at the moment with thoughts of peace and good-will to all mankind, and wishing perhaps to make amends for his mischievous prank of the morning, he nodded and smiled, and in further testimony of his friendliness held out a flower which he carried in his hand.

Incensed by such effrontery, she snatched the flower and contemptuously flung it to the ground as she swept along, leaving the junker to hide in his sleeve the laugh he dared not show.

Hester, meanwhile, on reaching home was rudely awakened from her sweet meditations by finding a crowd of rough men gathered before the door, and her father, bareheaded, upon the stoop, haranguing them. Unable to make her way into the house, she perforce stood still and listened. What could her father be saying that these men hung on his words with such breathless interest? Her curiosity was awakened.

"Cuyler was right, I say. Will he fall upon an honest man for doing his duty? He'll pistol us all next. Will ye stand and wait to be shot down like dogs?"

Loud cries of "No! No!" arose from the crowd.

"What right has he yonder in the governor's chair? He is no governor; he is but the underling of that old rat Andros the Bostoneers have trapped."

"Out with him!"

"What is he doing there? Plotting,—plotting to steal away your liberties. He is a Papist; his hand is against us. He would burn the town; he is getting his torches ready day and night. And why? Because we are Protestants, because we are Dutchmen, because we will not bow down to idols and yield ourselves slaves to Rome."

A hoarse cry like a muttering of thunder arose with ominous effect from the increasing mob.

"What would they do? They would bring over the Stuart, him the English have kicked out, and set him up here for a king."

"Never! Never!"

"That is not all. The worst is to come. There is a plot to destroy us; do ye hear?—a hellish plot. Next Lord's Day morning, on God's own blessed Sabbath, while we are at worship in his holy tabernacle, the devils are to fall upon us. They will cut us down, kill, slay, murder us, one and all, and hand over the town to the Papists."

"Down with them all!" roared the crowd.

"Where are our city rulers? What are they doing? The worshipful mayor and council,—why do they not protect us? Why? Because they are hand in glove with these bloodhounds!"

This was a touch too much; a murmur of consternation and protest arose from the crowd. For one moment there was a feeble movement of reaction, but with the instinct of a demagogue Leisler saw, and furiously stamped it out.

"Hand in glove, I say," he repeated, coming down the steps into the very midst of the throng, in his ardor. "They are all one brood, — cursed aristocrats. They look down upon the poor man. They would make lords of themselves! Years ago they cheated the poor savage out of his home. They seized upon all the fat lands in the province. Now they're grown rich they forget their Dutch blood. Damn their traitorous souls! They would betray us!"

The momentary compunction of the mob was swept away by this blast of invective, and with the blind impulse of sheep they followed on where their bold leader showed the way.

"They sell body and soul to the English, and are paid by riches and titles, — a pack of rogues and knaves and Papist cut-throats! Will ye have men like these to rule the country?"

"No! No!"

"Will ye suffer them to stay yonder in the Stadthuys another hour?"

"No! We will fling them out! Lead us on!"

"Mark ye what the people did in Boston?"

"Ay, ay! Lead us on! Huzza! Leisler! Leisler! To the fort!"

Turning suddenly about, bearing the bold orator in their midst, the infuriated rabble started to carry out their threat. Unprepared for the movement, Hester was thrown down and trampled upon. Happily her father saw it all. Beating back the crowd, he sprang to her aid, natural affection overriding even the fierce excitement of the moment.

"You are hurt, child? Hetty, my little Hetty, they have not killed you? Speak, child! No! Well, then, stupid jade! what do you in the street? Get

you in, and serve you right!" kissing her tenderly as he placed her in safety upon the stoop. "Get you in, I say, and let me not catch you in the street again."

Unhurt save for a few scratches, Hester stood gazing, dumfounded, after the howling mob until they disappeared along the winding street. With no suspicion of any serious cause of discord among her fellow-townsmen, she naturally regarded their action, in breaking the peace of the sweet twilight hour, filling with clamor the quiet little town, and setting up for enemies their own neighbors and brother churchfolk, as simple madness.

In her bewilderment only one impression remained clear; somehow, somewhere, there was a grievance against Mayor Van Cortlandt. Instinct took alarm; the secret she locked in her bosom had already become a dangerous one.

In this doubtful mood she went into the house. Her mother, seated at the supper-table, surrounded by the family, chid her perfunctorily for tardiness.

Vrouw Leisler, an easy-going, motherly Dutch housewife, with a mind given wholly to the management of her family, could throw no light on the state of public affairs, but dismissed the question Hester addressed to her upon the subject as usual, with, "I know nothing of all that; go ask your father, child." When told of the projected sail, however, and that Tryntje was to be of the party, the indulgent mother readily gave her consent. There was now nothing wanting but to secure Catalina.

Dr. Samuel Staats lived in a comfortable mansion on a quiet street not far from the fort, whither, directly after supper, Hester took her way, skirting without notice the excited groups that thronged the

streets, nor troubling herself to ask the cause of the disturbance.

Hardly had she entered the garden gate when she was greeted by a cry of joy from an upper window, and before she had time to ply the knocker the door was thrown open and Catalina flew into her arms.

The two friends presented an interesting contrast. Notwithstanding the slight difference in their ages, one was as unmistakably a child as the other was a woman. For the rest, they were as unlike as possible, and all the better friends in consequence.

"Hola, I heard you! I knew 't was you. There — there — there!" cried the breathless Catalina, showering her friend with kisses. "Bad, bad girl! — there, again! — 'tis two whole days since I saw you."

"I sent Quimbo for you this morning to go for flowers in the Magde Paetje, but —"

"I was out. I am enraged at it. Come in here. Sit you down — so!" and the imperious young hostess pushed her visitor into a big chair in a corner of the living-room, and nestled down by her side with arms tightly clasped about her waist. "Yes, what a pity for me to be out! Where was Quimbo loitering on the way? Why sent you not sooner? I went to Smiet's Vly with the rest to see Wouter Olfert set up his new water-wheel."

"But you are here now," put in Hester at the first chance, "and I am come to bespeak you for a sail in a ketch to-morrow to Staaten Island, which is full of flowers."

"Dearest Hester!"

"Go ask your mother."

"No, come you and ask her. She thinks you so wise."

"But let her know besides, that Tryntje is to go and have care of us."

"Oh, then is there no doubt; mother thinks me always safe with Tryntje. But come, you shall ask for me."

Hester arose, and followed across the hall and into the opposite room, Catalina announcing her entrance.

"Mother, it is Hester; she has come to speak with you."

The room they entered answered to the parlor in an ordinary Dutch house, where it would have been shut up in sacred disuse save on ceremonial occasions. This room was flooded with light, richly and curiously appointed, and had withal a characteristic air, notwithstanding the bizarre jumble of Dutch furniture, Eastern rugs and draperies, Indian pottery, and Oriental curios with which it was crowded.

The mistress of the house sat near one of the windows, busied with some embroidery. A shadow, like a passing cloud, swept across her face at sight of Hester. She rose, however, with great ceremony, and made her visitor a courtesy.

"Mother — I — we have come — You tell her, Hester."

"I come to beg you will let Catalina go with us for a sail to Staaten Island, to-morrow," began Hester, with directness.

The begum regarded her visitor with an inscrutable look. The pupils of her eyes dilated and contracted, the action of her heart visibly quickened, but she did not speak.

"It is to gather flowers," pursued Hester, insensible to small barometric indications. "We are to go in a ketch."

Madam, wearing the same baffling expression, silently shook her head.

"It is but a few miles over and back."

The argument produced no effect. Hester was naturally puzzled by this demeanor, for the begum had hitherto received her with the cordiality due to her daughter's dearest friend. Catalina, too, was evidently quite as much perplexed, for she stole around to her mother's side in a caressing way.

"We count upon being gone but a short time," continued Hester, with perseverance.

Still the lady made no answer.

"Tryntje is to go with us. My mother gave me leave to ask Catalina."

Quite unimpressed by these additional reasons, the begum sat quietly opposing a bulwark of silence to Hester's strengthening attack.

"Catalina, I am sure, is very urgent for going."

"Yes, mother, that I am."

"I should count it a great favor if you would let her go."

A dawning look of impatience at this untiring persistence began to show in the lady's face.

"If the day be not fair, we shall not go. We may, with good luck, be home for dinner. From your chamber window above, you may watch us all the way yonder and hither again."

The petitioner stopped to take breath. Without a word, the begum suddenly arose and courtesied in a very significant manner. Hester flushed, but kept her seat. Catalina, with keener apprehension, after a respectful salute, drew her friend from the room.

Hardly was the door shut behind them, however, when the disappointed girl burst into tears.

"What means she by treating you in such a fashion,—you, that have given no offence? 'T is the first time you had such a greeting from her."

Between her outbursts of tears and indignation she asked for more news of the expedition.

"And in what ketch are you to go?"

"The best in the harbor."

"And which call you the best?"

"Mynheer Van Cortlandt's."

The visitor's bewilderment was completed on beholding Catalina spring to her feet, and cry with flashing eyes,—

"Never! *Never* would I set foot in it!"

VII.

A SCORE of miles, more or less, northward from the town stood the manor house of Councillor Frederick Philipse, the richest man in the New World. His estate, comprising vast tracts of land bought for a song from the Indians, stretched for miles along the eastern bank of the Hudson. Intact in its virgin beauty, it formed a natural garden unspoiled by human hand, where thick-wooded hills, wild ravines, bold cliffs, and wide-sweeping meadows exhausted the resources of variety. Close at hand, gleaming through every clearing in the forest, flowed the broad and tranquil river, shut in on its western shore by pinnaled heights, which rose palled in purple splendor against the sunset sky, or withdrawn to mysterious distance in the morning mists, as, fold on fold, the fleecy vapor floated up from the surface of the water.

The house which stood upon this demesne was as worthy its surroundings as man's handiwork can well be in the midst of God's. It was simple, ample, unpretentious, and thus not without dignity. In answering the claims of convenience, comfort, and an enlarged hospitality, the builder had incidentally achieved a certainly homely grace and unsought impressiveness.

It chanced that Lieutenant-Governor Nicholson was visiting the councillor at the time of the outbreak in town, and he very gladly accepted his host's invitation to remain. Clearly he saw — as who could fail

to see? — the significance of the Boston news. He felt the spirit of change in the thickening air. Directly all interest in his administration fled; he thought only of retreat with a saving of dignity. Daily, therefore, after his routine work at the *Stadthuys* was dispatched, he made haste to shake off the dust of the cavilling little town, and gallop up to this lovely retreat, radiant now in all the beauty of early spring.

The London bachelor, with his fashionable habits, would never have been permitted to upset the sober regulations of the household in Madam Margaret's time, — she who used to go as supercargo on her own ships to Holland without relaxing for a moment her regulating grip on things at home. As it was, the widower-host allowed his visitor the largest freedom, and each went his separate way without interfering with the other.

It chanced one morning that the two were seated very late at breakfast; for although Mynheer had long since broken his fast, he returned to the table to keep his guest in countenance; moreover, the two had business of moment in hand.

"Whatever their new Majesties may conclude to do with the provinces," said Nicholson, chipping an egg, "'t is clearly my part to stand by the helm for the time being."

Philipse, with his heavy, neutral face void of expression, did not commit himself by assenting.

"There can be no two minds about that as a matter of right and propriety," went on his Excellency, rather nervously. "Somebody must govern; there is nobody with a better right, or for the matter of that any right at all."

He paused as if expecting an answer, but his host simply bowed.

"I was appointed by the Crown," he continued, salting his egg quite unconsciously for the third time, "and, whatever may be the state of things now, nobody will pretend to deny that King James had the power, at the time, to appoint me, or that he proceeded in a regular manner. Then 'tis plain, until somebody is sent over with a new commission, I am in of right, eh?"

"It would seem so," said Philipse, driven at last from cover.

"But we are standing on the verge of a volcano. Since those rebellious Bostoneers opened the ball by laying hands on Sir Edmund the leaven of discontent has been working through the whole country."

"Sir Edmund carried it with too high a hand yonder in Boston. There is no cause for the like discontent here."

"They'll not stick at causes; they'll find a cause fast enough, never fear. But the question is what to do. My authority is boldly defied. Heard you what Bayard said? Why, when I sent him last night to call these train-bands to order, as their superior officer, an impudent clown comes blustering forth and lectures him. 'Go back to them that sent ye! Go back,' says he, 'and tell them to go about their business; we'll none o' them!'"

"The fellow was in liquor."

"Not he. 'Twas a well-known creature of this Leisler."

"Stoll! Yes, I know him, — a rough dog."

"But for this Leisler himself, — how came he so suddenly to the fore? Who is the man?"

"A liquor-seller in the dock. He married a rich widow, and straightway thrust himself in among honest folks. He is grown of much consequence with the rabble, and he is, moreover, a deacon of the church."

"'Tis a lesson for you dissenters. A low-bred, scurvy fellow like that could never come to office in the Established Church."

"'Tis his money gives him consequence; but for all he has grown so rich, he can scarce write his own name, and goes about as ragged and greasy as when he was a varlet in a leather apron."

At this moment a servant entered hastily, and paused at the threshold with an air of some excitement.

"Pardon, Mynheer —"

"What is it?"

"There be great doings down at the fort. All the train-bands are gathered, and there is talk of the city being stormed by the Papists. 'Tis said Staaten Island is alive with them."

"Bring me no more such idle tales," said Philipse, sternly. "Go, and see you spread not this silly report among the people!"

"You see the fever grows," said Nicholson, significantly, as the man withdrew.

Philipse nodded ominously.

"What's to be done?"

"If you were to go down to them yourself —" began the councillor, tentatively.

"Not I! After Bayard's experience last night the rascals would stone me. If they have reached the point of turning upon their own colonel, all discipline, you may be sure, is thrown to the winds."

Philipse glared at the floor, barren of further suggestion, while his Excellency walked up and down.

"If we could but seize the ringleaders, this Leisler and his creatures, the contagion might be stayed for the moment."

"You have waited too long."

"Too long!" repeated Nicholson, irritably. "And by whose advice, prithee, did I wait?"

"We — ahem — nobody could well foresee such a state of affairs as —"

"I will send off a runner forthwith to Albany and another to Connecticut," interrupted Nicholson, with a sudden burst of energy. "I will appeal to the country. These scurvy clowns shall find with whom they have to deal. Come, let us get to work."

They were met on the threshold by another servant, with the breathless announcement, —

"Here is Captain Ludowyck, with a troop behind him, demanding to see your Excellency!"

"How now?" cried Nicholson, with a startled glance at his host.

The latter stood struggling with his dismay, and made no suggestion.

"Go say I will see Ludowyck, but not his myrmidons."

The servant stared.

"Bring in the leader, but keep out the men," explained Philipse, coming to himself.

The servant withdrew. The two turned back into the breakfast-room, and looked at each other in silence. Nicholson hurriedly poured and tossed off a glass of wine. He had not wiped his lips when the tread of heavy feet was heard in the hall, the door was flung open without ceremony, and a short, thick-

set man, with a half-score armed attendants, entered the room.

"Mynheer Nicholson," began the leader, without preamble, "I come to demand of ye the keys of the fort."

"What say you?" shouted Nicholson, starting to his feet, half-choked with indignation. "Who dares send me this message?"

"I come at the behest of Captain Jacob Leisler and the other captains of the train-bands, and it will be well for ye if ye presently obey."

"Get back to that rabble that sent you, and tell them they shall pay dearly for this insolence! Begone, I say!"

The lofty look and spirited tone of the governor took the doughty captain by surprise. His men, too, were plainly overawed by the magnificence of the house and the dignity of the two officials.

Ludowyck, none too confident, as it seemed, of his position, wavered before the angry glare of the governor, and showed signs of withdrawing, when his lieutenant whispered encouragement in his ear.

He began again: "Take good heed, Mynheer Governor, what consequences ye bring on yourself."

"Will you go?"

"I am sent hither for the keys," answered the captain, with a returning hesitancy of tone.

Disdaining to reply, Nicholson maintained his attitude of contemptuous dismissal:

"'Tis none of my affair, — 'tis for them that sent me to judge. Ye'll hear from them again, — trust me, ye will," muttered the daunted train-band captain, retiring with his followers slowly and reluctantly from the room.

Standing rigidly in his theatrical attitude until the sound of their footsteps died away in the hall, his Excellency then whirled about, crying, —

“This is not to be borne. Let us away to the Stadthuys and call together the Council! I will punish these rascals at the risk of my neck. The keys of the fort, forsooth! This blow is struck at us all. It means deadly mischief. Come, let us be stirring.”

Even the stolid councillor was startled by this revolutionary incident. Acting upon Nicholson's suggestions speedily and with vigor, he dispatched runners with appeals for aid to the other provinces, he posted off messengers to his fellow-councillors, and in an hour's time the two were on the way to town.

Colonel Bayard and Mayor Van Cortlandt promptly obeyed the summons. Once closeted with his council, Nicholson laid the matter before them in a few words. Bayard heard it all without surprise and coolly remarked, —

“This is but the beginning.”

“Let us make it the end!” retorted the governor, sharply.

“I am with you. What does your Excellency advise?”

“Proclaim William and Mary,” suggested the mayor doubtfully.

“Impossible! We have no official notice of their accession. 'Tis unsafe to take action on such idle rumors as are blown across the water to us.”

“And who knows but next week the tables may be turned?” added Philipse. “The French have taken up King James, and he has a great following in Ireland.”

“None the less,” went on the governor, impatiently,

"something must be concluded here and now as to dealing with these rascals. They are stirring up the people against us with tales of plots and conspiracies and a thousand such lies."

"Why not gain time by affecting to make terms?" said the mayor again.

"The terms I would make are the four walls of a dungeon!" broke out his Excellency.

"The stocks and the whipping-post are better suited to that sort," added Bayard, contemptuously.

"I fear me the disease has got beyond that stage," interposed the mayor, with a wag of his head.

"Poh!" cried the governor, with an intermittent gust of resolution. "Poh! I say. A show of authority and the thing is done. These curs have been 'at somebody's beck and nod all their lives, and they'll heed the crack of the whip like a dancing bear."

"There's nothing, then, but for you to go down to them again, colonel, and bid them disperse under penalty of being held rebels," ventured Van Cortlandt.

"Not I," growled Bayard, shrugging his shoulders. "I took my turn yesterday, and was well-nigh tossed in a blanket."

"What then shall we do? Come, come, gentlemen, life and property are at stake. If the sun goes down with this question unsettled, 't will settle itself in a way you won't like."

Philipse, who had been listening for some minutes in silence, now interposed; all turned to him with an air of expectancy.

"Threats and bluster are waste of time; we have no means of enforcing them, — we must try other measures."

"'Other measures' is vague, Mynheer," laughed the governor, ironically.

"Let your Excellency issue a proclamation," calmly pursued Philipse, "calling upon all good citizens to keep the peace —"

The governor gave an impatient sniff.

"— commanding these men to go back to their workshops on pain of being declared enemies to the welfare and peace of the community —"

"Poh! Poh, sir!"

"Let the mayor follow this up by calling a public meeting," continued Philipse, with unruffled composure, "and appeal to the citizens to uphold the present government and preserve the peace until orders arrive from England."

"And pray what will all this avail?" asked the governor, with a sneer.

"'T is good advice," said Colonel Bayard, decisively; "it will gain time, it will create a diversion, it will throw them off their guard meanwhile, mark you! When night comes, we can seize this braying ass and thrust him into prison."

"'T is something, at least," commented the governor, doubtfully; "'t is better than sitting still. Colonel, I am with you; we will make the trial. They shall find in the end who is ruler here. Once let me lay hand on that knave Leisler, and — Hark!"

"Eh?"

"What was that?"

A scuffling of feet was heard outside. Directly the door was burst open, disclosing Ludowyck at the head of his entire band, wearing this time a very significant air of resolution.

"Mynheer Nicholson," he began, in an uncompromising tone, "I come again to demand of ye the keys of the fort!"

Nicholson controlled himself by a visible effort.

"On whose authority come you?"

"Captain Leisler sent me, as I told ye, and he will very speedily satisfy ye of his authority if ye comply not with his request."

Stung by this threat, his Excellency lost all command of himself, and roared, —

"Go back to this braggart, and say I will have his saucy head struck off and his body given to the crows if —"

Before the incensed governor could complete his foolish threat the other councillors interfered, and proceeded to hold apart a whispered consultation, which Captain Ludowyck interrupted without ceremony, —

"Will ye give me the keys or no? If ye yield them quietly, well and good. If not," striking his halberd on the floor with a ringing blow, "the consequences be upon your own heads. I leave not the room without the keys."

Nicholson paced up and down, accompanied by Van Cortlandt and Philipse on either hand, talking to him in tones of expostulation and entreaty. At length, whirling about, he said with an outraged air, —

"I yield only to violence."

Ludowyck bowed grimly.

"You shall answer for this, mind you, with life and estate."

"We fear not the threats of Papists and traitors."

"Never think to escape the penalty of your villainies by calling names! The day of reckoning —"

"Will ye give me the keys?"

"There they lie!" cried the governor in an outburst of exasperation, tossing the heavy keys upon the table. "Take them at your peril!"

Without further ado the sturdy train-band captain seized the ponderous iron symbols, and marched from the room without so much as a salute to the humbled officials.

Meantime, at the fort, the return of Ludowyck with the keys produced a profound moral effect. The little knot of captains were startled at their own victory. They had taken the first step of a career in which they could no more stop than a falling stone can stay in its course. They must needs go on; the revolution had begun. Realizing too late that they had called up a spirit beyond their control, the timid took alarm; they began to count chances and to weigh consequences; several crept away by stealth to the Stadthuys to patch up a compromise with their offended commander, Bayard.

One bold spirit, however, there was who knew no dismay. Leisler was not wanting to the moment. He accepted the situation freely, fully, and defied its worst consequences. Mounting the rostrum, he straightway threw off all disguise, and frankly confessed there was no turning back.

"At last, my friends, we are free. See, here is the pledge of it!" shaking the keys. "At last we have cast off the yoke. We'll have no more to do with yokes. We'll have no more to do with Papists and Popes and despots. Down with them all! Henceforth we stand for liberty! William comes of a race of freemen,—he will leave us to rule ourselves! But the work is not done. Those vipers yonder in the

- . Stadthuys, they thirst for our blood ; they will not rest till they have done us a harm. Beware of them ! Beware of next Lord's Day ! They have planned to make it a new St. Bartholomew's, more bloody than the old. Beware, I say ! The torch is kindled under your roof-tree ; the knife is whetted that will drink your blood !"

Cries of "Traitors ! Traitors ! Bloody villains ! Down with them ! Drag them out ! Down with them !" drowned the voice of the orator.

"Stand by one another, and look to me. I will care for ye. When the signal sounds for the murderers and savages to begin their work, come ye here. I will protect ye from the malice of these devils !"

This harangue was received with such storms of applause by the rank and file that the unhappy captains had no alternative but to join in. Thus the waverers were brought back to the fold. Leisler seized the occasion. He drew up a declaration on the spot, which the nine captains of the train-bands signed then and there on a drum-head.

At nightfall, after a day of exhausting toil and excitement, Leisler took his accustomed course homeward along the Strand. The events of the day had made him a man of mark. Partly by his own boldness and address, partly by the force of circumstances, he had been lifted into great and sudden prominence. The effect was notable. Every eye was upon him ; the very children and slaves gazed in awe and admiration upon the hero of the hour. Absorbed, elated, unconscious of all this public homage, he strode along, loudly declaiming to his companions upon the day's transactions.

Nearing his own house, he seemed not, for a time,

to note a couple, laden with baskets and wild-flowers, loitering upon the stoop. It was indeed not until he reached the bottom of the steps that he fairly recognized the two standing there, with hands clasped and deep in converse. Immediately he flamed forth, —

“Ei — ye dare touch flesh and blood of mine! Stand back! Stand back! Get into the house, ye shameless hussy! What do ye here with this Papist whelp?”

Choking with rage and shame, Steenie could not articulate the words which came flooding to his lips.

“I — I — well for you ’tis Hester’s father — else would I — but — but you shall smart for it — I’ll — I’ll make you sorry yet!”

“So! your worshipful father will send the schout for me! Bah! that for your father! We’ll have no more of him and his sort. We’ll pull him down, strip him of his thievings, and send him begging. But for *you*, young puppy! let me catch ye about my house again, — I’ll have ye whipped at the cart’s tail!”

About to retort, Steenie was hustled away by Leisler’s rough companions, and although he made a vigorous resistance he was quickly overpowered and driven down the street, covered with mud and offal rained upon him from the gutter.

VIII.

“**V**IRTUS sibi munus” was the high-sounding motto of the Van Cortlandts, and the design upon the family escutcheon signified in some heraldic way their descent from the Dukes of Courland.

On the whole, as men and mottoes go, they had done fairly well in making good the boast. Their record for uprightness was at least as clear as their neighbors', while for shrewdness and energy it was for the most part better. Indeed, later generations had turned into a jest the reproach once suggested by their patronymic, Short-land.

Although born with a silver spoon in his mouth, Stephanus Van Cortlandt, the father of Steenie, owed what he had and what he was chiefly to his own exertions. He had not only made the most of himself individually by cultivating his wits and curbing his passions, but had added a hundred fold to his estate both in lands and chattels.

Naturally, the management of such large interests had developed in him certain qualities of mind and character which gradually came to be recognized by his fellow-townsmen as the traits most fit for a chief magistrate. Thus it came about in the course of time he was made mayor. In the discharge of his public duties he gave such general satisfaction that he was returned again and again to the office. And with good reason,—he not only administered the government with ability, but upheld its dignity with a be-

coming pomp. Furthermore, his comely person, his costly garb, his sumptuous mansion, his troop of servants and slaves, and, by no means last or least, the forceful character and commanding presence of his wife were all factors of value in the sum total of his popularity. Withal, Mynheer Van Cortlandt was esteemed a model magistrate.

Accustomed so long to rule over a law-abiding populace, the worshipful mayor regarded the present violent proceedings at the fort with unmixed dismay. Flying in the face of law and order, withstanding duly appointed officials, seemed acts so illogical and unwarrantable that he could find no rational standpoint from which to judge them.

Accordingly he went home from the Stadthuys, after the episode of Ludowyck's seizing the keys, shocked and bewildered. Indeed, his extreme astonishment appeared to have quite overbalanced the wrath and humiliation proper to the moment.

Madam Van Cortlandt sat awaiting him. The lady is not unknown to history. A native vigor of understanding, a masculine force of will, and a lifelong association with the leaders of thought and action in the little world in which she lived had begotten in Gertryd Van Cortlandt a virile interest in public affairs. She had, moreover, so often given sound and practical advice in matters of moment that she had come to be regarded in administration circles as the silent member of the Council.

Well aware of the present crisis, knowing too that her husband had been hastily summoned to the Stadthuys a few hours before upon urgent business, Madam was naturally anxious to hear what new turn affairs had taken. For her own reasons, however, she chose

not to betray by so much as a word or look any interest in her husband's return.

Profoundly acquainted with his temperament, she perhaps achieved thereby economical results in the way of time and patience.

Mynheer, with exasperating scrupulosity, put away his hat and stick, wiped his shoes again and again, sat down in his easy-chair, fumbled with the papers in his hand, sighed, adjusted his ruffles, cleared his throat, crossed his legs, coughed, and otherwise temporized, until, perhaps finding the ominous silence of his helpmeet more imperative than a volley of questions, he began: "I know not what we are coming to."

Madam knit on in a controlled way, but with a staccato stitch.

"Everything is upside down, authority is put at defiance, the people are gone mad."

Madam vouchsafed no comment.

"The train-bands are risen against us."

"Leisler?" suggested Madam, with contempt.

"Yes."

"Humph!"

"His aim is clear under all his pretence, — to bring himself into power, and thrust us out."

"How came he to such a pitch of credit with these men?"

"By inflaming their minds with talk of plots and Papists."

"A braggart's wind is nothing," said Madam, coolly loosening by a little jerk the tension of her yarn.

"Let him talk."

"But he begins to act. To-day he sent Ludowyck to demand the keys of the fort."

"So?"

"And his Excellency refused."

"Of course."

"But, seeing the danger, he hurried to the Stadthuys, called a meeting of the Council, and laid the matter before us. We were in the midst of discussing some means of punishing their insolence when the door was burst open, and in he came again."

"Ludowyck?"

"Yes, with his whole troop at his heels, and demanded the keys then and there to be delivered."

"And his Excellency?"

"Had no resource but to give them up."

"Father in heaven!" Shocked out of all self-control, Madam started to her feet. She presently checked herself, and walked up and down, profoundly moved. At length stopping before her husband, she asked abruptly, "And were you standing by?"

The worshipful mayor quailed before the eyes of his wife. "I—I was there. I told you so."

"And suffered it to go on?"

"What was to be done? The man was backed by a score of hulking fellows. They were ready for any violence; the madness had already seized upon them."

Madam did not answer; she continued looking at her spouse with a gaze that caused the sweat to start out in beads on his pale forehead.

"What was to be done?" he repeated, in a tone of deeper deprecation. "There was Leisler yonder at the fort with ten times as many more rascals to burn down the Stadthuys and hale us forth if we refused."

"And what then?"

"Eh?"

"If they had haled you forth?"

This was a cruel question. Mynheer had no answer

for it. Unable to bear the intolerable look with which it was accompanied, he started to his feet, and walked about the room, plucking up a show of spirit as he talked.

"'Tis my part as a public officer to do everything to keep the peace. This business is only a fever, a passing excitement, which will blow over in a few days if met with calmness."

Madam did not answer; she sat down and resumed her knitting. She made bad work of it, too, repeatedly ravelling out what she had done. Her husband studied her face with anxiety. He seemed waiting for her to speak, but she held her peace.

"What think you we must do?" he asked, after a long pause.

"Seize that man."

The crisp laconism of this answer and the unwavering positivism which inspired it so took the wind out of Mynheer's sails that his little fleet of objections and obstacles could hardly come to port.

"'Tis impossible. He holds the fort, mind you; he has a small army besides."

"Seize him, at all hazards," repeated Madam, as if she had not heard a word of all this.

"We have no force equal to it; he has the men, he has the arms, he has the public money. 'Tis impossible, I say."

Madam knit and ravelled in silence.

"'Tis useless to attempt what is not in our power," continued Mynheer presently, as if to invite further discussion.

"Are all the train-band captains in league with him?" asked Madam suddenly.

"No; three are still wavering."

"Three,— 't is something." She spent a long minute in deliberation. "And what hinders these from going over?"

"Their own qualms,— nothing else."

"Get them together, then!" sharply and with decision. "Stay the progress of the contagion. Fix them in their allegiance; find out their following."

"I have sent for them already," plucking up at this unexpected point of coincidence. "I am waiting for them now."

"Waiting!"

Mynheer perceptibly winced at the intonation.

"I expect them every minute."

"If every minute of this night were an hour, every hour of it would be precious. Why are you sitting here?"

"What better can I do?"

"Put forth a proclamation! Brand these wretches as traitors! Set a price on their heads! Let not the people think they are gaining ground!"

The decision and energy of his wife's tone affected Mynheer; it afforded him visible comfort. He arose, and seemed on the point of taking some action, when the outer door was heard to slam violently, there was a rush in the hall, and his eldest son came bursting into the room.

"Father— sir— I— that dog— that hog— quick! send and seize him!"

Mynheer, simply irritated by the interruption, gave no heed to its merits.

"Don't trouble us now, my son. Your mother and I have weighty matters to discuss."

"You have nothing weightier than this," persisted Steenie. "That beast heaped insults upon me!"

Absorbed as he was with the one imperative question of the hour, this persistence was intolerable to Mynheer.

"Go away, I say!" he cried angrily. "Leave us alone! I have no time for foolish quarrels."

"'Tis no foolish quarrel, this!" shouted the junker, confronting his father, with blazing eyes, and pounding the table with his big clinched fist until everything on it rattled. "He called me a Papist, and threatened me with the cart's tail!"

Mynheer was getting bewildered at the universal spirit of insubordination. He simply stood and stared.

"Who is this, my son?" asked his mother, with unshaken equilibrium.

"Old Leisler."

It may be taken as an evidence of Madam's control over the small emotions that she did not change front at this.

"I told him," continued Steenie, addressing his father, "you would call him to account, and he snapped his finger at you and cursed you, and said you were a traitor, and to be pulled down; and when I would make answer to his taunts, his brutal fellows thrust me into the street, and pelted me with mud."

"Where was this?" asked Mynheer, gradually awakening.

"In the Strand."

"What were you doing there?"

"We — I had taken a party to Staaten Island in my ketch —"

"And then?"

"We had but just come ashore in the dock, and —"

and the basket was heavy, and I was helping Hester home with it —”

“So, that silly chit again! You brought it on yourself, then,” interposed Madam, calmly.

“She is not to blame for her father,” retorted Steenie, stoutly.

“But she is of his brood, and her pink cheeks will not cure her bad blood. Take warning, my boy, and keep clear of her.”

Mynheer had at last a tangible thread to the snarl. Forthwith he put in angrily: —

“Mark you, now, from henceforth I forbid you to hold any acquaintance with that girl, or ever be seen in her company. As for this matter, you are well served for your folly.”

Madam did not join in this foolish inhibition, but studying the junker's crestfallen face as he turned to withdraw, she added, with a significance which fixed his attention, “Whenever an ill afflicts you, my son, which you can find no cure for, bide your time!”

IX.

THE townsfolk were aghast when they heard of the doings at the fort. It was as though a sir-occo from the tropics had burst upon their tranquil little island. The very air, like the atmosphere of thunder-storms, seemed dense and murky, presaging convulsion. There was, withal, a pervading feeling of panic. The children, taking advantage of the relaxed vigilance at home, flocked in gaping wonder to Bowling Green. Groups of whispering slaves, in defiance of the law against their congregating on the street, gathered at corners and in byways, keeping a watchful outlook lest the schout should detect them and drag them off to the whipping-post. The trainbands inspired the awe of a conquering army, and Jacob Leisler was suddenly invested with the mysterious interest of a nursery hero.

Perhaps no one in all the town was more deeply disturbed than Dr. Samuel Staats. In vain he rubbed his eyes and looked about to see things settle back into their old ruts. Everything was awry. The element of correspondence had vanished from the social scheme. The moral world had warped away from the physical. Ousted from his comfortable place in the old dispensation, he could by no means adjust himself to the new. The result was perplexity and distress.

Amidst all the darkness and confusion, there were here and there feeble points of light, like fixed stars, towards which he looked as guides. In the first place,

he was a Dutchman ; no convulsion of nature or dynastic revolution could affect that unalterable fact. Thus by birth, blood, and association he seemed rather to belong to the party at the fort than to the so-called English party at the Stadthuys. Again, the situation brought back old stirring remembrances of the recapture of the city from the English in 1673. While, lastly, as a stanch member of the Reformed Church, he necessarily took alarm at the cry of "Papist."

Naturally yielding to these varied influences, he unconsciously gravitated slowly and surely in one direction. It needed but a slight determining force from without to give him impetus.

It was the day after the seizure of the fort. Early in the morning there came a thundering knock at the door. When it was opened, a loud, rough voice resounded through the house : —

"Tell Dr. Staats Captain Leisler bids him come to the fort without delay !"

Thereupon, without waiting for an answer, the messenger strode off down the street.

The begum, sitting at her embroidery, heard the message ; it may be she even recognized worthy Ensign Stoll's voice. Dropping her work, she made an odd little reflex movement with her hands, — a gesture so unmeaning it could not have been voluntary.

Rising presently, she went towards the door, stopped, turned back, and slowly walked up and down the room. At last, with a sudden outward fling of her nervous hands, as if casting off some resisting impression, she proceeded to a small room at the end of the hall, which her husband used for an herbarium.

The Doctor had already put aside his work, and was buttoning up his long-tailed coat. He turned his heavy,

sedate face toward the door as his wife entered, with a passing look of surprise; it was evident she did not often invade his workshop.

"You go out?" she asked, carelessly, as if casually noting his preparation.

"Yes."

"'T is better to stay at home."

"Why?"

"Yonder 't is so — so —" She finished the sentence with a movement of her hands indicating confusion.

"Poh! no, — old huysvrouw's tales."

"It must be most urgent, the business that takes you forth." She drew near, and affected to correct some detail in his dress.

"There is need I should go."

"So?"

"I shall be back before long," he said by way of consolation.

"Is it for your own affairs there is such need?" she asked, unheeding his assurance.

"In part."

At a loss for an expletive, she made a gesture of impatience.

"The public business is every man's business when there is need of him."

"Who says there is need of you?"

"I have been sent for."

"There is no king here. To send for another is to have power over him."

"Sometimes."

"Who is here has power to send? Comes the word from his Excellency?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Be sure it does not, or I should be slow to heed it. His

Excellency's day is over. The king who set up his Excellency is pulled down himself."

"And has the new king set up one in his place?"

"Not yet."

"Who then takes the power to himself?"

"Little woman," said the doctor, making a movement to escape, "I cannot explain these matters to you; they are hard to understand."

She renewed her interest in his toilet, smoothing his sleeves, tucking in the ends of his neck-cloth, and now and again casting a quick glance up into his face.

"Do you understand them, then, — you?"

The doctor coughed uneasily, and again tried to edge away, whereupon, changing her tone, madam cried imperatively, —

"Do not go!"

"Where?"

"To that man."

Despite the phlegm which encased him like an armor, the worthy Dutchman almost started at this unexpected thrust.

"Ei?"

"To go is your ruin."

"Poh! poh!" he said, stroking her with his fat hands. "Somebody has been filling your ears with fables."

She broke away from his caress, and her slender figure seemed visibly to tower as she continued her warning: —

"Go not, I say! I see clearly, while you are blind."

The doctor looked discomfited, but his flabby, white face only settled into stubborn lines of resolution.

"That man," pursued madam, vehemently, "has always been a poor beast; now he raves, he mounts

a car he cannot guide, he goes on — on — The — the abyss lies before."

Affecting to laugh, the doctor gently moved his excited helpmeet from his path and walked to the door, saying in a matter-of-fact way : —

"Be not afraid, my dear; I will keep clear of his car. Never you fear —" His fat sides shook at the joke. "I will not go near the abyss."

"It will seize you too, then, this madness," muttered the lady, looking after him. "Go; but it is for nothing, — nothing, only to follow in the steps of a fool!"

Listening mechanically as her husband's heavy step resounded along the hall and the outer door closed behind him, the begum's musing was presently interrupted by Catalina, who came bursting in with a petition : —

"Mother, I would go out."

Madam looked at her daughter vacantly, without realizing her words.

"I would go out, if it please you," repeated Catalina, more emphatically. "Gertryd and Johanna are at play in the garden; you will not be alone."

The mother nodded, still with divided mind.

"I need not be back to dinner, I hope? You will not be troubled now that you know where to find me."

Receiving another nod of acquiescence, Catalina with a joyous look skipped away, only turning at the door to say, —

"I will come back before nightfall, and if those noisy men are in the street Hester will send —"

"Stop!" The cry was ringing and imperative. "Where would you go?" demanded the mother, aroused in an instant to suspicious alertness.

"To Hester's."

"You shall not!"

"Mother!"

"You shall not go!"

"It is to Hester's, — to Hester's, do you hear? She expects me. I pledged myself to go."

"Say no more; you cannot."

"But why? What shall I say? She will think I forget. What is the matter?" cried the disappointed girl, her utterance choked by tears of grief and anger.

"Listen, Catalina, — listen, child! Strange things go on in the town, — stranger things come to-morrow; all is upturned. Danger is everywhere; it is not safe to go. Dry your eyes now, and go play with Johanna."

But Catalina was not to be so easily consoled. She protested with energy against being obliged to break faith with her friend. Impatient of this childish interruption at a moment of deep pre-occupation, the begum promised to despatch a messenger at once to advise Hester that the visit was postponed, and further appeased her daughter by proposing, —

"If you must needs go out, you shall visit Tryntje. In that direction is no danger. Outside the walls all is at peace."

After some demur, Catalina accepted the compromise, for in her faithful nurse she had a sympathizing confidant. Once reconciled to the change of plan, she lost no time in making her way to the *bouwerie*. As her mother had predicted, the road in that direction was clear.

It was Saturday morning. Like a model *huysvrouw*, Tryntje was putting things in shining order

for the Lord's Day. The pewter ware stood in a row above the fireplace. The brown and blue Delft had been taken down piece by piece, and rearranged in the corner cupboard; the hearth-tiles had been stained red, the furniture polished, and Tryntje, with arms bared and skirts tucked up, stood holding a box of fine white sand, wherewith she was about to sprinkle the floor, already scrubbed to spotless cleanness.

Dropping the box, she spread wide her arms to receive her loved fosterling, who came rushing to embrace her.

"Oh, Tryntje, you are glad to see me!"

"Mm-m! Mm-m!"

"I have come to eat dinner."

"'T is too much happiness for me."

"But you must go on with your work, mark you," continued Catalina, tossing her hood and jacket on the table. "Where is Ripse? I will play with him."

Tryntje silently pointed to a barrier built across the bedroom door, behind which the chubby infant was seen busily engaged with some bits of broken china.

"I will get over there too, and watch you," said the visitor, stepping over the light boundary. "Nobody can make such patterns in the sand as you, Tryntje."

"Ei! Ei!" cried the flattered little woman, hastening to fetch one of her best chairs.

"Oh, Tryntje, I'm so glad — you know not how glad — to see you! I wish I could run away, and come to live with you."

"Zoo! Zoo!"

"Mother is like some other one; she thinks to herself. She does not heed one. She grows harsh and strange."

"'T is nothing."

"Yes, but it is. Mind you the time she would not let me go to Staaten Island, and Hester, Hester herself, came to beg for it? And now, this very morning, when I asked to go and see Hester, she broke out with such anger. I never saw her so. I cannot think what is the matter."

"'T is nothing, quite nothing," said Tryntje, soothingly, as she cast the sand thickly about her.

"And Hester,—she also is grown strange, these last days," continued Catalina, as she watched the busy huysvrouw. "She thinks to herself, too. Sometimes she heeds not at all when I speak."

"What matter?" interposed Tryntje, as she went on dexterously forming with her broom, in the sand, a wide border of an intricate shell-work pattern all around the room.

"Because she has secrets from me. Only yesterday I came upon her suddenly, and she hid something in her bosom."

"M-m!" exclaimed Tryntje, leaning her chin upon the top of her broom-handle, and gazing at Catalina with a knowing look. "Did she do that?"

"Yes, did she, and turned red as a rose up to her very hair."

"Zoo!" said Tryntje, nodding her head significantly.

"What is it?" cried Catalina in uncontrollable curiosity. "Tell me, Tryntje!"

"I see something in the meal that day they come from the Kolch together."

"They?"

"And the buttermilk —"

"What?"

"'T was all for him."

"Him?"

"She touched not a drop; 't was all for him. See that?"

"No, no. What is it?"

"And Staaten Island?"

"Yes?"

"I go with them. They say not a word to me all the day, but whisper, whisper, whisper to themselves."

"What do you mean?"

"Come here, my treasure. Help me with the schoorsten valletje," said Tryntje, bringing forth a long strip of pink-checked calico, freshly washed and ironed. "There, take you hold of that end. I mean," continued the dame, as she pinned up her end of the long valance across the top of the fireplace, "she has a sweetheart."

"Hester?" cried Catalina in a shrill, startled tone, dropping her end in the ashes.

"Mm-m!"

"Who — who is it?" she demanded, clutching the little vrouw's arm.

"No less than the son of the worshipful mayor himself."

"That big — rough — saucy — hateful creature?" gasped Catalina.

"No such a one, but a fine, tall junker as ever I saw."

"Oh, Tryntje, you are the only friend I have left in the world!" and throwing herself into her nurse's arms, she burst into a violent fit of sobbing.

X.

CATALINA was inconsolable at what she considered the loss of her friend. That Hester should have deserted her was bad enough; that she should have kept from her a secret, and a secret of such moment, was worse; but the cruellest blow of all was to find herself supplanted in her friend's affection by that odious junker Van Cortlandt.

She met this first trial of her life in a rebellious, undisciplined spirit. By turns she was a woman, by turns a child. She underwent rapid changes of mood, abounded in whims and caprices, developed a contempt for food and sleep, together with other small eccentricities, betokening a mind ill at ease.

The begum, used to frequent fluctuations in Catalina's spirit thermometer, gave little heed at first to these new symptoms, and not until several days had passed awoke to the fact that something unusual had happened.

Her action, upon this discovery, was interesting. She did not question Catalina; she refrained from talking with her; she only narrowly observed her. By patient brooding over the matter, it gradually dawned upon her mind that the trouble dated from her daughter's last visit to Tryntje.

Communication with the bouwerie was frequent, and a pretext was soon found for summoning Tryntje to the house upon some domestic business. The unsuspecting Catalina was quietly sent away on an

errand that morning, and the vrouw, when she arrived, was shown at once to the room where the begum sat at her embroidery.

The lady graciously nodded to her visitor, and by a gesture indicated a rug just in front of the tambour-frame as a place for her to stand.

"You are always welcome," she said, without interrupting her task. "Goes all well at home?"

"At the best, many thanks."

"The little one grows?"

"That does he."

"And the goodman is in health?"

"Always, I thank you much."

"'T is fine weather now for your tulips," continued the hostess, stopping to pick out a false stitch, while her visitor stood waiting with an air of deference.

"Nothing can be better."

"Has it happened you have plucked your geese yet?"

"Not yet, my lady; I am waiting for a day."

"We have need of some feathers. Let me have all you can spare."

"That you shall, and the best."

"Catalina says you have a fine flock."

"'T is not much."

"Catalina goes often to your house. She plagues you, I fear."

"Never. She comes too little."

"She gave me no account of her last visit."

"Zoo?"

"I hope nothing went amiss;" and the lady accompanied her words with a searching look.

Tryntje cleared her throat, and hesitated. The begum became intent upon a snarl in her silks.

"She is heart-broke that Hester has a sweetheart."

An effect like the passing of a ray of light across a picture was seen in the begum's face.

"And who is the junker?"

"Mynheer Van Cortlandt."

The busy needlewoman pricked her finger. Pausing to stanch the blood, she murmured in a commonplace tone : —

"Ah, my head, — it forgets everything! We are in great need of eggs. Pray you, send a basket by Rip in the morning."

Long familiar with the peculiarities of her former mistress, Tryntje showed no consciousness of this sudden change of subject.

"He shall bring the last that are laid."

"So. Then I need not keep you longer here, when you are thinking of the little one at home."

"Take your time. I had not a thought of him."

Casting a compassionating look upon the dullard who had failed to take her hint, the begum went on with her work without condescending to offer another. Tryntje, after waiting patiently several minutes for further recognition, shifting the while awkwardly from one foot to another, at last began to understand.

"The feathers, and — the eggs, — 't was for that you wanted me?"

"Only that."

The lady's small black eyes were as unfathomable as beads, as she gravely returned the vrouw's parting salute.

After an understanding so explicit the begum was naturally astonished to hear, early next morning, that Vrouw Van Dorn was at the door again, demanding to speak with her. Dissembling a look of curiosity,

she signified by a gesture that the visitor should be admitted.

Entering the room, Tryntje walked forward, and without a word of warning or preamble exclaimed :

"Hester is shut up ; the door is locked against her ; she is never to see or speak with her sweetheart again ! The beautiful junker is driven home like a dog ! Hester cries herself sick ! She sends for Catalina !"

Although the begum sat motionless while these spasmodic sentences were exploded in her ear, certain interesting changes took place in her countenance. She plainly resisted divers impulses to exclaim, to interrupt, to start from her seat. To such good effect did she control herself, however, that Tryntje waited impatiently a whole minute for her to speak.

"Her father does this ?"

"Who else ?"

"He hates Mynheer Van Cortlandt ?"

"'T is like."

"He cares nothing to make his child happy ?"

"Not he."

"He shuts her up like a thief. He thinks only of himself. He will make all bend to his will."

Even in her own agitation Tryntje noted the growing intensity of these utterances. Her look of wonder warned the speaker, who, checking herself, said abruptly, —

"Catalina is in the garden. 'T is better for you to tell her."

Tryntje, nothing loath, went on her errand. Left alone, the begum, throwing off her head-dress, passed her hands nervously over her face, and otherwise showed signs of agitation. Directly, however, at the sound of footsteps in the passage, she resumed

her self-control as effectually as if it had been a garment.

It was Tryntje again. Quite forgetful of decorum, she came rushing in with the announcement, —

“She will not budge!”

The begum was plainly very much astonished.

“Not?”

“Not a step.”

Through and beyond the breathless dame, as if she had been imponderable ether, the lady stared for several minutes. The result of her reflection directly appeared. Her action, however, remains as puzzling now, after the lapse of nearly two centuries, as it seemed at the moment.

“Go bring her here,” she said presently, as if awaking from sleep.

Tryntje went out, and after a few minutes came leading in the reluctant Catalina.

“You will not go to your friend?” asked the mother in a tone of reproach.

“No! no! no!” vehemently. “She is no friend, — she has left me. Her heart is changed, — she has another. Let her have him! I am glad she is shut up, — glad! glad! glad! Now she sees who is her friend, — now she thinks of her dear Catalina!”

Waiting until this outburst of passion had spent itself, the mother said simply: —

“’T is yourself, then, you love, yourself you most think of. If you had loved your friend you would have pity on her when she is unhappy.”

This deft and nicely timed touch did its work.

“I do pity her, — I do pity her, and I *will* go to see her, but she is no longer my friend! No longer — no longer — no longer!”

Burning indignation at the insult put upon him by Leisler' for a time overmastered all softer emotions in Steenie's heart. Impatiently he waited for the condign punishment which he felt sure would be visited upon the offender. Undue notions of his father's official power added to a warranted faith in his mother's strength of purpose confirmed him in this belief.

Thus occupied with himself, he was for a long time blind to the significance of things going on in the town. Little by little, however, he awoke to a realizing sense that something very unusual was taking place; that in some inscrutable way the Winckel Street liquor-seller had risen into sudden and threatening prominence; and that his own worshipful father, far from any thought of making the militant leader of the train-bands an object of discipline, was striving by frantic efforts to hold fast to the few shreds of authority still vouchsafed him by that worthy.

Together with the discovery that Captain Leisler had become a personage to inspire respect, not to say fear, came the news that Hester was shut up in the house by orders of her stern parent. There could be no mistaking the cause. Wrath straightway admitted Love a cotenant of his heart.

Thereupon, despite the threats of the tyrant and the warnings of his own family, he began to haunt the neighborhood of Hester's prison. Back and forth he paced through the Strand, reckless of consequences, keenly scrutinizing every opening blind or fluttering curtain; but never a glimpse had he of the longed-for face.

With patience well-nigh exhausted, he was medi-

tating some bolder move, when one morning he saw coming towards him, from the direction of the dock, a figure, in whom he presently recognized his new acquaintance of Smiet's Vly.

"Good day, little one!" he said, in the involuntary tone of patronage one uses towards a child.

He might have spared his condescension. The object of it ignored him utterly, and passed on her way without a look of recognition.

Steenie laughed aloud at this lofty air. He even turned with an amused look to watch the haughty damsel down the street. Where was she going? A thought flashed through his mind. Darting forward, he ran with all his might to overtake her.

"Wait! Wait, I beg you! Catalina, I would speak with you!"

The little lady turned a deaf ear.

"Catalina — Catalina!" he panted, in his eagerness actually laying hold of her arm. "Wait! Listen to me!"

"Dare to touch me," she cried, almost fiercely, "and I will call for the schout!"

"I mean no harm," he faltered, quite humbly. "I want to see you. I would have you stop."

"I will not stop."

"Truly, I must speak with you."

"Go speak with them that want to hear you."

"But you are the only one who can help me."

"I do not want to help you."

"Fie! Fie! Do you bear malice for a little fun?"

"I do what I like. I ask not your advice."

"But I need your aid. I would ask a favor. You can do me a great service. Listen!" placing himself in her path. "If I have given you offence, I am

truly sorry. I ask pardon; I will make amends. I meant no harm. This is no time to bear grudges. Here is a grave matter. Hester, your friend, is shut up yonder. I cannot get speech with her. I cannot send her a message. You are going to see her. They will let you in. Take a word from me, I beg you!"

"I will take no word. I will not listen to you. Never speak to me again. Let me go, I say!"

The astonished Steenie moved aside, and the wrathful girl swept by him.

At a loss what to do next, the junker sauntered down into the dock, where he saw a crowd gathered. In his aimless mood any distraction was welcome. He elbowed his way to the front, and found himself in luck. A young negro woman was about to be flogged; they were just tying her to the whipping-post. Here was something which promised for the moment to lift his own weight of care. The girl merely shrank when the first blow fell upon her bare back. At the next stroke she screamed lustily, and the vigor of her outcries increased with the progress of the punishment. A murmur of appreciation ran through the crowd. Steenie's own eyes glistened with a languid interest. Although a common sight, the incident had dramatic elements which raised it to the dignity of a diversion.

Finding, when this was over, no other such happy resource, the junker wandered vaguely across the bridge, and following the bank of the canal, climbed the Verlettenberg, the steep little hill at the head of the Heeren-Gracht. Here, for lack of anything better to do, he sat listlessly throwing sticks and stones into the canal, when his attention was drawn by a beating of drums.

Looking down upon the little fortress, which lay below him to the right, he saw several of the trainbands armed and undergoing drill. He saw, too, messengers coming and going, ox-carts of provisions arriving, and a general appearance of bustle and activity outside as well as within the walls.

A natural thought occurred to him. He looked to the left, down upon the Stadthuys: not a sound nor a sign of life appeared. The contrast was suggestive. The startled junker sprang to his feet.

"The governor — the Council — my father!" he cried. "Are they asleep? What are they doing? Do they know what is going on? Will they make no move until it is too late?"

Urged on by a sudden resolution, he quickly descended the hill, and was about to cross the bridge, when he felt himself plucked by the sleeve.

He turned about, and beheld Catalina standing with averted and forbidding look.

"You?"

"*She* wanted me to come," began the messenger, in an implacable tone. "I do it for *her*, and not for you."

"You have seen her!" burst in Steenie, oblivious of all lesser considerations. "What did she say? How did she look?"

"She says she will go to church on Sunday."

"Yes, yes."

"Perhaps her father may not be there."

"Whether he be or not —"

"Then she may get a word with you."

"She shall! she shall! Thank you, Catalina; thank you a thousand times!"

"I don't want your thanks. I won't have your thanks. I do it for *her*."

XI.

MOVED by the instinct of self-preservation, the procrastinating gentlemen at the Stadthuys at last made an attempt to appeal to public opinion. At the eleventh hour they decided to step down from their pedestals and have a talk with the people.

In ordinary times personal influence or official dignity might have gained them a hearing, but here were times out of joint, and as they soon discovered, the malady they undertook to treat had already long since passed beyond the reach of preventive remedies. The fever was in the blood, and day by day fired more deeply the hearts of the lethargic Dutchmen.

There is reason to believe that Bayard disapproved these long-delayed and futile measures, but at the instance of his fellows he went forth with the mayor and Mynheer Philipse to reason with the excited crowds, gathered about the landing-place in the dock or upon the fort-green.

“What’s the matter here, my friends?” said the mayor, approaching the mob in the dock. “What brings you together? Has some harm befallen?”

With the lifelong habit of subordination the men made way for their chief magistrate, but with no look or word of welcome.

“What new thing has happened, I say? Have you not work to do and bread to eat? Have you not wives and children and comfortable homes? Is not God mindful of you more than you deserve, making your

seeds to sprout in the ground, and sending sun and rain for your crops?"

Having no answer at hand to these awkward questions, the listeners maintained a sullen silence.

"What's lacking, I say? Or who has done you any wrong? What brings you here, forsaking your tasks and wasting the fair daylight, with knitted brows and mutterings?"

"We'll have no Papist to rule over us!" cried out some one, bluntly, from the outskirts of the crowd.

Directly there was a hoarse cry of applause.

"And who, tell me, is a Papist? Is it Mynheer Philipse, or Colonel Bayard, or I?"

"Them that go with Papists are no better than their company."

"Who is the Papist, I ask? Not his Excellency?"

The speaker was interrupted by a loud murmur from the crowd.

"Who dare stand forward and lay such a charge?" demanded the mayor, with a show of indignation. "Colonel Nicholson is no more a Papist than Dominie Selyns himself. He is an upright, honest man, who will abide by the law and do justice to all."

But though they could not answer, the good citizens would not approve. One by one each little group melted away and disappeared, and the astonished mayor found himself again and again without an audience. The other councillors had the same mortifying experience, and, meeting at noon near the Stadthuys, they gloomily confessed to each other the hopelessness of continuing their efforts.

Meantime, as weak measures are worse than none, they had done their cause a positive harm. The mob had no stomach for truisms. They wanted dogma-

tism, not logic; brute force, not persuasion. They wanted boldness, decision, action, — in short, leadership. And they found it.

Down at the fort, like a clarion, rang out incessantly, morning, noon, and night, the warning voice of their self-appointed leader, the prophet of the hour.

The fateful wheel was already set whirling, and it knew no pause. In motion only a revolution has life and being. Like an unquenched fire, it must needs move on with ever swifter and fiercer progress until its desolating work is done.

Affairs in the province grew momentarily worse. News of discontent, of insubordination, of outbreaks, poured in daily from the country districts. In the town something in the very air told of the impending crisis. The old leaders seemed stricken with paralysis, the new nerved with a superhuman energy. The people awaited in tragic suspense the approach of the fateful Lord's Day, concerning which so many dark forebodings had been uttered.

At last it came. Strange to say, Providence saw fit to lighten the darkness of doom by causing the sun to shine, the birds to sing, and the waves to dance in the bay as usual. The worthy citizens were shocked by so gross an incongruity. They confidently expected the day to be marked by awful convulsions of nature, — tempests, earthquakes, and upwhirled sulphurous flames from the bottomless pit. With equal trust they looked for invading hordes of French and savages, for the uprising of some secret mysterious order in society, to annihilate all good and virtuous men.

Heavily the moments of the fair May morning wore away. Suddenly the tense silence was broken by the tolling of the silver-tongued bell in the fort. The

sweet, familiar sound sent a chill to the very marrow of the watching and waiting citizens. Had it come at last? Was this the signal for the massacre to begin? Was it their own knell? No. It was simply the call to the morning service, — a call which all their lives they had obeyed. Now, too, they must obey it, though fire and sword or devastating flood barred the way.

With nerves high-strung by long suspense, with faces ominous of evil, they marched forth, those honest burghers, followed by their wives and children, — marched stoutly forth, with the air of conscious victims, to the martyr's post.

Arrived within the fort they found a passing relief in the presence of the large crowd of their friends and neighbors assembled. The fortifications gave a sense of security, and their place of worship was a second home to them all.

The famous little church is well known to students of history; it stands forth a prominent and striking feature in all the early views of the town, with its double-peaked roof and its marble inscription proclaiming: —

WILHELM KIEFT DIRECTEUR GENERAL.

HEEFT DE GEMEENTE DESEN TEMPEL DOEN BOUWEN.

Within, though severe, it was not less picturesque, with its big stoves hoisted up on stilts to a level with the gallery, its old chandelier fitted with long candles, its droll little octangular pulpit in which the dominie looked dangerously like a jack-in-the-box, and its bell-rope dangling in the middle aisle.

Filing in as the last stroke of the bell sounded, the men took their places on a raised bench which ran

around three sides of the room, while the women and children silently seated themselves in the middle space. The church seemed cold and a little damp after the warmth of the outer air, and the pervading smell of tobacco denser than usual this morning, as the men puffed fiercely at their pipes.

Precisely upon the point of the hour Dominie Selyns climbed into the pulpit, inverted the hour-glass on the desk, and looked down upon the deacons sitting in a row beneath him as if noting the absence of a well-known figure; then gazing calmly about upon his anxious congregation, in unfaltering tones he gave out the hymn, "A firm city is our God."

The zieken-trooster, with less command of himself, pitched the tune a full half-tone below the key, and the congregation sang it through in distracting discord. The hymn ended, there was an unusual interruption to the service. A dozen or more slips of paper were handed up to the clerk, who in turn passed them one by one up to the high pulpit, on the end of a split stick.

It was a matter of much surprise to the congregation that, notwithstanding these numerous petitions, no allusion was made to the disturbed state of affairs save this one brief passage in the long-drawn prayer: —

"O God of hosts, in the multitude of thy creatures we are as nothing, yet thou carest for us! Teach us, we pray thee, to put away vain fears, to dread no evil but thy wrath! Teach us that while thou art near no harm can befall us, and that thou art with the chosen of thy people even from everlasting to everlasting!"

Midway the sermon the dominie suddenly stopped.

The deacons marched out and stood in a row under the pulpit, facing the people, each carrying upon his shoulder a pole with a bag at the end, from which depended a little bell. The dominie solemnly pronounced a blessing upon the collection about to be taken, and the deacons started upon their rounds, passing the bag scrupulously under the nose of each individual, the poor and rich alike, who, warned by the tinkling of the bell, could by no means feign abstraction.

From his seat on the raised bench set apart for the men Steenie commanded the whole congregation. Presently his eyes brightened, his lips moved, he started forward in his seat, and with difficulty restrained himself from crying out. Vrouw Leisler, with her daughter, was coming down the aisle. One glance at Hester's pale cheeks and downcast eyes sent the hot blood in a flood to his face. He saw her unhappiness, and remembered the cause of it.

Oblivious now of the preacher's words, oblivious of the people's anxiety, the junker sat with unconcealed impatience gazing upon that one rude bench and its occupant. Hitherto Hester, glancing furtively about, had failed to discover him; but in the general movement attending the taking of the contribution she made a more careful survey. Their eyes met. A hundred words were compressed into the glance.

Meantime the anxious people, although intent upon every outside movement, were yet somewhat reassured by the serenity of their pastor and the calm and orderly conduct of the service. Coming forth from the little sanctuary, however, they found themselves once more in the stifling atmosphere of plots and omens. It was whispered that Leisler and the captains of the

train-bands were closeted in secret session in the governor's house, of which they had latterly taken possession. Several of the train-bands stood drawn up in arms, ready for any emergency. The sentinels stalked up and down with a portentous mien.

After the service many of the little flock gathered about their pastor for comfort and advice. He could give them no good reason for so sudden and profound a disturbance of the peace, but bade them be of good cheer, and he would go himself and confer with Captain Leisler, and learn, if possible, the real state of affairs.

True to his promise, the dominie went straight to the governor's house, and demanded admission. After some delay he was ushered into a large, low-studded room, where stood the object of his search busily haranguing his associates.

Leisler paused, and a momentary look of discomfiture swept over his face upon the abrupt entrance of his pastor.

"Deacon Leisler," said the divine, not without severity, "I missed your presence at church. If leaders and elders be wanting, how shall the common sort be kept to their duty?"

"Dominie, ye know well I am not often wanting," answered Leisler, in a tone of respect, "nor would I now be but for matters of grave moment which hold me here."

"There be no matters of graver moment than your duty to God, nor can ever be."

Somewhat taken aback by this prompt reproof, Leisler had need to consider a moment his reply.

"There be other duties than praying and psalm-singing."

"What other duty may there be to warrant you in breaking God's divine commandment to keep holy the Sabbath Day?"

"Watching over the safety of his people," retorted Leisler, quickly; "taking care they be not betrayed to the enemy; taking care that fire shall not visit his sanctuary nor destruction overcome his flock."

"And whence comes this peril?"

"From the arch-enemy of mankind, — from yonder whore of pollution, the Church of Rome."

"The damned Papists!" broke in Stoll.

"Where find you proof of this?"

"Everywhere. On every side they are plotting to destroy us. They lie in ambush in our midst. They are ready to rise. When the hour comes and the signal is given, the town will run red with the blood of its people, and the sky be blackened from the ruin of our homes."

"How comes this to your ears, and not to mine?"

"I am not to tell every man what I know," answered Leisler, his eye flaming with enthusiasm, and his person assuming a lofty port. "'T is enough that I know it. And yonder traitors have done it all!" pointing towards the Stadthuys.

A loud murmur of approbation from those about him encouraged the speaker to proceed.

"I am put forth by my fellow-citizens to protect them. I stand in the breach. I stand here ready and waiting, and if those dogs and traitors do but raise a hand —"

"By God, we will sweep them from the earth!" shouted Stoll, finishing the sentence.

"Silence!" thundered the dominie, turning with blazing eyes upon the speaker. "One breath from



"Take heed what you do in the name of the Almighty!"

Him whose awful name you mouth so glibly would send your hardened soul to burn in everlasting fire ! ”

The abashed ensign quailed before this vigorous rebuke, and interfered no more in the conversation.

“ And as for you, Deacon Leisler,” pursued the dominie, in a warning tone, “ take heed what you do in the name of the Almighty ! Take heed you stir not men to strife without cause ! Take heed the fever of ambition or the greed of revenge moves you not to deeds for which you shall answer before a mightier tribunal than that of men ! ”

With these words the undaunted preacher turned upon his heel and withdrew.

In the general confusion attending the coming forth of the congregation, Hester found no difficulty in slipping away with Steenie. Regardless of the general panic, regardless of the impending peril, they walked calmly out of the fort, and following a beaten path which lead towards the water, made their way to the Copake rocks, a bold ledge which formerly jutted forth into the North River, not far from the fort. Here, among the nooks and crannies of the cliff, they easily found a seat quite secure from landward observation.

They sat for a space silent, clasped in each other's arms.

“ Steenie ! ”

“ My sweetheart ! ”

“ What shall we do ? ”

“ We will run away. ”

“ No — no ; that I dare not,” said Hester, startled at the bold suggestion.

“ Would you go back to that — to him yonder ? ”

"He is my father," faltered Hester, in meek protestation.

"And what if he be?"

"I owe him duty and obedience."

"You owe him nothing. He has forfeited all claims upon you."

"The Bible says —"

"'Honor your father and mother.' Good, while they are worthy of honor; it says nothing of honoring a tyrant."

"We live in great dread of him," she went on, after a little, in a tone of self-justification, "Mary and mother and I,—he is so changed. We are nothing now to him. His head is full of plots and conspiracies. He calls himself a prophet."

"He is —" The wrathful junker checked himself. "'Tis all talk, brag, and bluster, to deceive the vulgar, to bring himself to power."

"We know not what to think. He talks of a great work he is called to do, of blood to be shed, of fire and ruin and slaughter— Oh, 'tis terrible to hear! Then he fixes his eye on a point in the air, and talks in a way we cannot understand. We dare not speak. We dare not cross him. If anything goes wrong he flies into a mighty passion, and swears most wickedly."

"He is a madman. 'Tis not safe to live with him. You shall not go back,— never!"

"Truly I shudder at the thought. We watch for his coming. We dread to hear his step. When we wait to meet him, 'tis a mercy if we miss a cursing. If, however, we run away and hide out of his sight, he sends fiercely to hale us forth."

"You shall never go back."

"Oh, what else can I do? There is no help for me."

"There is, I say."

"How, tell me, and where?"

"Listen! I have a kinswoman at Vlacktebos. She will receive you for my sake. 'Tis far away enough from town to be secure."

Hester looked tempted, but irresolute.

"She is a good, pious woman, and will give you kind treatment. After 'tis discovered you are gone, and the storm is blown over, I will go counsel with Dominie Selyns upon what's to be done."

"I fear,—'tis an awful thing to run away from home. How shall we come to this place?"

"Easy enough. We may go in my ketch to Breuckelen, and make the rest of the way on foot, at the very worst."

"We might be seen setting forth."

"Not a bit. We will sail after nightfall. Come, let us go this very night."

"Sh-h!"

A sound of marching feet and a clatter of arms were heard approaching from the left. Looking around, they saw a sergeant of the train-bands with a squad of a half-score armed men, to whom had been assigned the duty of patrolling the shore to guard against any hostile assault by sea.

"Ei! Ei!" hiccoughed the sergeant, with a vinous utterance. "What's here? Here's mis-mischief hatching! Misch — hic — mischief — see!"

"Get away with you! We are peaceable citizens minding our own business," said Steenie, starting up indignantly, "and I warn you to have a care how you molest us."

"He-hear him, men! Look ye here, young cock, no crowin' here! I'll — I'll tell ye wh-what ye are!"

"It's Rip!" exclaimed Hester, in astonishment, as the men drew nearer.

"Eh?"

"Rip Van Dorn, Tryntje's goodman."

"He's a meddling fool, whoever he be."

"'T is only that he has stopped too often at Vrouw Litschoe's —"

"I'll tell ye wh-what ye are," pursued the vigilant sergeant. "Pa-Papists, — a couple of damned Pa-Papists hatching a p-plot."

"Hold your saucy tongue, and go your way!" cried the junker, beside himself with rage.

"A. plot, I — hic — say, — hatching a plot! I — I've been hunting for ye all day! Fetch — fetch 'em along to the captain!"

"Rip!" cried Hester, aghast at this threat. "Look at me! Do you know who I am?"

"'Rip!' Humph! There be no R-Rips here, mark ye!" with an unrecognizing leer. "Sergeant, if ye p-please, — Ser-Sergeant Van Dorn, at your bidding."

"Listen!" continued Hester, severely. "You know very well who I am."

"That I do. Ye're a Pa-Papist, — a damned fine little Papist!"

"Hush, I say! I am nothing of the kind, and you know it well. So now pray lead your men away, and go about your business."

Sergeant Van Dorn shook his head, and hiccupped out a very cunning laugh.

"My business! So! That will I, and t-take ye along with me! Ye shall g-go to the captain and

t-tell all about the p-plot ye 're ma-making here with this other Pa-Papist!"

Whereupon, in spite of entreaty, threat, or exposition, the two were led away in custody by the triumphant Rip.

XII. .

HESTER naturally trembled at thought of the consequences, both to Steenie and herself, of being dragged before her father in his present mood. Despite her entreaties, however, the zealous Rip hurried his prisoners towards the fort.

To all inquirers on the way he bawled out, triumphantly, "Papists! C-caught at last — caught hatch-ing a p-plot. See the wretches! They would butcher us — they would fire the t-town!"

Upon the green outside the gates they came upon a group of persons loitering to discuss the extraordinary state of affairs. Hailing them in clarion tones, Rip proclaimed his discovery. Encouraged by their gaping wonder, he was going on to enlarge upon the importance of the capture, when his eye fell upon a familiar object in the crowd. He stopped short in his bombast. His voice stuck in his throat; the martial insolence faded from his eye, the swagger from his gait. Pausing in his march, the hulking, roistering sergeant visibly slunk into an abashed clown before the apparition of a grim little figure which suddenly stepped forth from the throng.

"Zoo!" it began, in a corvine croak.

"'T is you — m-my treasure?"

"You are a great soldier!"

"Ei?"

"Already the war is begun, then?"

"N-not yet."

"But Vrouw Litschoe, good woman, keeps up the courage till you go, ei?"

"Th-the church is out early to-to-day," said the disconcerted sergeant, with a puerile attempt to change the subject.

"A great, *great* soldier!" repeated the vrouw, with a withering survey of her spouse.

Finding his muddled wits quite unequal to the occasion, and having from long experience a well-grounded dread as to the result of the dispute, Rip forbore to answer, but with a tipsy assumption of dignity beckoned his wife to a private parley.

"C-come here, my treasure! Co-come to me! I would — hic — talk to ye. Here, I say!" He repeated the invitation in tones ranging through the whole gamut of expression, from rotund command to faltering entreaty, his pleading enforced by insinuating signals of a fat forefinger.

But his inflexible helpmeet disdaining to budge from her position, Mahomet must needs go to the mountain. Edging up to her, therefore, with a very unmartial bearing, he entered upon an undertoned, deprecating explanation, to which the listener, scorning all subterfuge, replied by loud sniffs of disgust.

Meantime the prisoners looked on with differing emotions. Steenie, too much outraged at the indignity offered them to heed anything else, was impatient at the interruption, but Hester, recognizing in the little vrouw a possible ally, eagerly called her by name.

Tryntje, who had thus far been so taken up with her husband that she had not heeded his following, looked dumfounded at sight of the captives.

"Tryntje, Tryntje, see you! 't is Mynheer Van Cortlandt. We are seized for Papists,—Papists, mind you!"

“Goede Hemel!”

“He — we have done no harm. We were sitting yonder by the sea. What think you my mother will say to see me dragged though the streets for a Papist, — and on the Lord’s Day, too?”

“Ye hear,—ye see what ye do!” cried Tryntje, shaking her husband’s arm in her consternation.

Gathering himself with much ado, the sergeant stared blankly at his prisoners.

“He affects not to know us,—he is made a fool by the brande-wyn. Tell him, Tryntje, tell him we are not Papists.”

“Look ye! ’t is Hester and Mynheer Van Cortlandt ye have here. They come from the church,—I have seen them there myself.”

“These P-Papists, say ye?”

“Do ye take for Papists honest people coming from church? Church, mind ye! ’T is better than Vrouw Litschoe’s. A soldier! Ugh! go home to bed!”

The crestfallen sergeant stood helplessly staring.

“If these be n-not Papists, wh-where be the P-Papists?”

“Go ask the captain; ’t is he talks of Papists. Go, I say, and take to him his own child for a Papist; what then comes about?”

“Ei?”

“The sergeant is whipped at the cart’s tail and drummed out of town for a drunken fool.”

“Wh-where be the Papists, then?” repeated Rip, with tipsy persistence.

“Set these free, and go look for them at the pot-house.”

“Set ’em free!—let ’em go free! hear ye?” hic-coughed the sergeant, turning angrily to his men.

"My vrouw says these be not P-Papists, 'n' she knows. Wh-what are ye doin' wi-with these, 'ei ? Ye 've made a bl-blunder, see ? Let 'em g-go, I say !"

It was only after several emphatic repetitions of the order that the guard, who were all more or less deeply indebted to Vrouw Litschoe's reluctantly obeyed.

Hardly had the liberated pair thanked Tryntje for her good offices, when Hester, recognizing among a group of people just issuing from the gates some members of her own family, whispered aside to her companion, —

"Go — quick ! Let them not see us together !"

"And you — you will go back to prison, then ?"

"There is no help."

"Where — when shall we meet again ?"

"Go, go ! They come this way."

"The bouwerie."

Hester looked quickly at Tryntje, who nodded emphatically.

"Find some pretext to go there — soon — to-morrow !" whispered Steenie, hurriedly.

In a moment more he was lost in the crowd.

Next day the junker set out betimes to keep his tryst with Hester. On account of the shorter distance, he chose to go by way of the Landpoort.

It was a bright June morning ; a fresh wind blew up from the water, the lilacs and apple blossoms in the gardens along the road filled the air with sweetness, and the young man's spirits, buoyed up by so many cheering associations, rose to the pitch of confidence. With youth, health, vigor, an ardent love, a soaring hope, as allies, what could avail against him ?

Walking briskly forward, he thought out in detail his scheme for Hester's relief. It seemed there could

never be a more favorable time for carrying it into effect than now, while her father's whole mind was intent upon the crisis in public affairs.

Despite his sanguine mood, however, a whole crop of little doubts sprang up in his path like the weeds by the wayside. Would Hester's courage uphold her at the ripe moment? Would his kinswoman receive her, under the circumstances? Could he keep the matter from his own family? Might not Leisler raise a hue and cry which would make any hiding-place impossible? Would Dominie Selyns approve? Last, but first in present interest, would Hester be able to find a pretext for keeping her appointment at the *bouwerie*?

Absorbed with these riddles, he heeded not, until close upon them, some persons in the highway, evidently engaged in an altercation. Something unusual in the character of the group drew his attention; a number of Indians — the upper end of the island was still swarming with them — seemed to be barring the way of a traveller, whose escort of slaves made loud and vehement protestation.

Drawing nearer, Steenie recognized a well-known and striking object, and a moment's attention made him master of the situation. In the midst of the road stood the begum's palanquin, — a light, graceful kind of litter which Dr. Staats had imported from India for his wife's use, as she could by no means be persuaded to trust herself in the saddle, after the fashion of the Dutch ladies. The Indians, a strolling band of Najacks, accustomed to look upon the blacks with contempt on account of their servile condition, meeting, as they supposed, one of that despised race riding in such state upon the highway, had stopped

the little cavalcade to satisfy their curiosity, greatly to the terror and disgust of the lady. But regardless of her fear and repugnance, they coolly persisted in examining her jewels and fingering her garments with many grunts of perplexity and admiration. It was while she was undergoing this ordeal that Steenie approached. Directly she caught sight of him the lady called loudly for aid.

Having heard her complaint, the junker turned upon the savages with an air of authority, announced himself a son of the mayor, reproved them sharply for interfering with the lady, whose rank he duly described, and concluded by warning them, upon pain of bringing their people into disfavor with his townsmen, against repeating the rudeness.

Impressed by the stature and bearing of the newcomer, the Indians, disclaiming all evil intent, went their way.

In view of the daily familiar intercourse then existing between the Indians and the colonists, the whole affair was quite commonplace. The begum, however, chose to look upon it otherwise. It was her first encounter with the red men, and she could not be persuaded they intended anything less than assassination.

Regarding her deliverance as a true feat of knight-errantry, she was eloquent in thanks, —more eloquent, indeed, than intelligible to Steenie, who stared at such tropical fervor. In her Oriental zeal nothing would do but to make her gratitude concrete. It must needs have a symbol. Drawing from her finger, therefore, a ring of value, she pressed it upon her benefactor. By no means clear that the ring was not proffered by way of reward, he indignantly declined it. Thereupon

she would know the name of one to whom she was under such an eternal obligation. Intent only upon keeping his appointment, Steenie muttered his name and strode away, leaving the lady peering after him from between the parted draperies of her palanquin with a new and quite particular interest.

Rip found himself very heavy, that same Monday morning. It was with much difficulty that his thrifty little wife routed him out of bed in time for breakfast at sunrise. Although coming off sound in limb and wind, he had nevertheless found his campaigning somewhat exhausting. Nerves so long strained to repel the attack of oncoming hosts needed unbending. He felt himself listless. He was in no mood for work. As laws are silent among arms, so, too, for the most part, the arts of peace languish. The ploughshare grows rusty while the sabre gleams. It need scarcely be said that things at the bouwerie were sadly neglected.

Tryntje, well aware of this, had not failed to hint more than once that things were going to wrack and ruin. Moreover, with a woman's insensibility to argument, she could not be brought to understand how impossible it is for one to be a warrior to-day and a farmer to-morrow, how painfully the smock cramps the chest high-swollen from the shining cuirass, and how ill it consorts with human blood and nature to come back enthusiastically to the half-finished furrow with the clang of cymbals still ringing in the ears. But by every hero and patriot of his own sex, it will be readily understood why, after the cattle were fed and a few necessary chores done, Rip showed no disposition to go afield.

Meantime, the expected visitors, either or both, might arrive at any moment. Once let Rip see them together or suspect the cause of their coming, and all hope of secrecy was at an end. In doubt as to his purposes, Tryntje indulged in a little skirmishing.

"'T is three hours after sunrise."

"Well-nigh."

"You will be late yonder."

"I go not to-day."

"The war is over, then?"

"I had my turn yesterday."

"Zoo! one fights not every day in war?"

"'T is time for that when the enemy comes."

"He stays a long time away, this enemy."

"Never fear but he comes quick enough when I am killed, and you have to till the bouwerie by yourself."

"I tremble not for that till it comes."

"Zoo!"

Time was flying; the sun was now nearly four hours high. Tryntje became agitated, although not yet barren of expedients. Having watched Rip pack his pipe for a long smoke and settle himself with a grunt of comfort in the doorway, she began again in some precipitancy.

"There be many down there?"

"At the fort?"

"Mm-m."

"A great crowd."

"Where comes the food from?"

"Who knows?"

"They must needs buy a great store."

"Cartloads."

"We sold not any yet."

"Ei?"

"We have hoof-kaas and rolliches to spare ; then there be our apples rotting in the cellar."

Slowly but surely the suggestion did its work. The smoker's eyes kindled with a speculative gleam, his lips contracted into a pucker of resolution. The instinct of the chapman was aroused. Starting up at last, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and declared energetically, —

"'T is a good thought! I go there."

"'T is late for to-day," suggested Tryntje, conservatively.

"Damn! No ; it is plenty of time. Get ready the basket. I go now."

Tryntje showed no exultation at the success of her tactics. She quietly packed the basket, and from the door-way watched her swaggering spouse out of sight, as he went striding away on his errand to town.

It was well that Rip took a short cut across the fields that morning, or he would have met the incautious Steenie plunging along the highway, and thus all Tryntje's trouble would have gone for nothing.

It was, to be sure, a ridiculously early hour for such high, tragic, grave, and tender business as Steenie had in hand, and so he had sense enough to see for himself when he came to the door of the cottage, and found Tryntje still busy over her breakfast pots and pans. He lost nothing in the vrouw's eyes by excess of ardor, it would appear ; for she received him with the most respectful deference, brought him a glass of cool buttermilk as he sat in the shaded stoop mopping his forehead, and listened with a flush of pleasure to his praises and thanks for her aid the day before.

"Sh-h! sh-h! in with ye, Mynheer!" called the little dame, warningly, in the midst of their talk.

"Here they come; she, and her brother with her. In with ye, quick, or the cat's out of the bag."

Hardly had Steenie vanished through the door when Jacob Leisler, Jr., came riding up, with his sister on a pillion.

"Here's Hester come to stay with ye, huysvrouw, while I go to Sapokanican in search of forage. She is to be home, mind ye, by noon, in case I come not back this way, and you may send Rip with her."

Tryntje received this blunt message with scant courtesy and not a word of comment. Hester, waiting only until her brother was out of sight, turned with inquiring eye to Tryntje, who answered only by a nod.

"And Rip?"

"Yonder!" with thumb pointing townwards.

Thereupon, without wasting further time in empty compliments, the thoughtful vrouw caught up her offspring, who came creeping to the door leaving a long wake on the sanded floor behind him, and went back to her pots and pans.

Although the watcher within lost no time in taking her place, it was not until a full half-hour had been wasted in preliminaries and incoherent talk that he suddenly bethought him of the object of their meeting.

"Things go no better at home?"

Hester shook her head.

"He knows of your coming hither?"

"That does he not, else be sure I had never come."

"He keeps guard over you still?"

"No; he takes little heed of any one; he thinks only of yesterday."

"And the failure of his prophecy — Did I not

warn you? 'Papists and plots'! Faugh! there is no plotter here but him!"

"He has nothing but threats and curses for his Excellency, for your father and Colonel Bayard; 't is a most bitter hatred he cherishes for all three."

"Never fear but 't is well repaid."

"He grows mightier and mightier at home," continued Hester, rehearsing new causes of grievance as if with deliberate intent to inflame her hearer's mind.

"Curse him for a tyrant!"

"Jacob and mother believe him a great prophet, like them told of in the Bible. They think all he does is right, and that God is behind him."

"They are daft!"

"Heaven knows what he may choose to do next!"

"'T is best not to wait upon his whims."

He looked at her inquiringly; she let him draw what inference he would from her silence.

"'T is best to escape now while we can," he went on, still without evoking an answer.

"You are unhappy there?" he began again, after a little pause.

She nodded.

"Come, then! let us not lose another day! I will take measures at once."

Startled out of her silence by these decisive words, she faltered, in a voice full of doubt and trouble, —

"If I were but assured it is not wrong!"

"Never fear! it cannot be wrong. Tryntje shall go with us to Vlacktebos. I will take counsel of the dominie."

"And the dominie, — think not but that he will go straightway to *him* with the story."

"That will he not."

Absorbed in their discussion they had unconsciously sauntered out upon the highway, and so, quite regardless of precaution, on towards the town. They brought up at last at the Landpoort.

"What say you?" asked Steenie, anxious for a decision.

"I would have guidance before I can move in the matter."

"T is not safe ; who is there we can trust?"

"I will pray upon it by myself, then, and let you know my mind."

"Do! and as soon as may be Tryntje shall come to you to bring me your answer. Meantime I will have all things in readiness."

"Hush!"

They were startled by the apparition of a man's head above the city gate.

"What's this?—the gates locked at midday!" said the junker in consternation.

So it proved. For the first time, that very morning, in a passing fit of suspicion, Leisler had stationed guards at the gates, with orders to challenge all passers and inquire into their business. Indignant at such a tyrannical measure, Steenie answered defiantly. The altercation brought to the spot the captain of the guard, who proved to be no other than the redoubtable Joost Stoll. One glance showed this astute official the situation. The young people saw themselves detected. Stoll had been a witness of their former humiliation. Taking advantage of this knowledge and of his present position, therefore, he roughly bade them enter, sent Steenie on his way with threats and curses, and gave Hester in charge of an armed escort, to be taken to her father's house.

It was dinner-time, as it chanced, and Leisler was at home. Outraged beyond words by Stoll's report, he caused the refractory girl to be brought before him. She came, looking ready to fall.

The stern father regarded her in grim silence for a whole minute, as if to let her taste in full measure the awe and suspense proper to the moment before the thunderbolt of his wrath descended.

"So," he began at last, "ye dare to look at me? Ye dare to stand before my face? Ye will not mind what I say, ei? Ye will run away from home? Ye will go after that long-legged poltroon, that scurvy cub of a Papist, — ye *will*, I say!"

Hester turned white before the gathering blast, her breath came short and quick, she clutched the chair before her for support; but for all that, there appeared in her streaming eyes and compressed, quivering lips a look of immovable stubbornness, which for the moment invested her face with a startling likeness to the formidable one she confronted.

"By God! we will see!"

The hurtling bolt seemed to shake the ground beneath her and fill the air with whirring stars, yet she made no attempt to move, but stood holding fast to the friendly chair, and never averted her eyes from the fierce glare bent upon her.

"I will teach ye now a lesson ye'll never need to learn again! I will —"

The sentence was never finished. There was a confused noise and movement near at hand. In her bewilderment Hester was only conscious of a slave standing in the open doorway, saying over and over the word *gone*.

"What?" shouted Leisler, starting from his seat.

“The governor!”

“Nicholson?”

“He has run away!”

“When — where?”

“In a ship to London!”

“Quick! let me pass!” And brushing his forgotten daughter from his path, the excited captain strode in hot haste from the room.

XIII.

PARTLY to see that his ketch was in good sailing trim, and partly, it is suspected, to have an opportunity to wrestle with his anxieties, Steenie went that afternoon for a sail. Chance-led, he took a spin up the North River, without much heeding the conditions of wind and tide. In consequence he spent the afternoon in tacking to get back, reaching the city just before sun-down.

Skirting the western shore of the island on his home stretch, he noticed a solitary figure upon the Copake rocks. Idly scanning it as he came nearer, he recognized Catalina, fishing.

The rocks, originally a continuous ledge, had been wrought by the triturating waves into the semblance of a hugh dumb-bell,—two big, rounded knobs connected by a rugged isthmus, over which, at high tide, the water flowed amain. It was on the outer one that Catalina sat.

Knowing that the tide was coming in, the sailor thought proper to warn the little fisher-maid. He hailed her repeatedly, however, without result; she was absorbed in her sport, and the wind was against him.

Presently, having occasion to renew her bait, she looked up. He shouted again with might and main, making at the same time vigorous signs for her to leave the place. Failing to hear his words, misconstruing his gestures, and having no high opinion of

him at best, she received his warning with silent contempt, and quietly went on with her fishing. His outburst of vexation at her wilfulness ended in a good-humored laugh.

A half-hour later, having moored his ketch and landed in the dock, he bethought him again of the disdainful fisher, and went roundabout, on his way home, to look after her.

A glance showed that his warning had been well-founded. There she was, a prisoner; the narrow path between the rocks being already covered by the tide, whose angry surface presented to the aghast Catalina a barrier as effectual as though it had been fathoms deep.

Finding her retreat cut off, her cries for help drowned by the hurly-burly of winds and waters, she stood looking about her with a pathetic air of helplessness. The sight of the junker aroused her ebbing spirit; she made a move as if to attempt the passage. Steenie shouted, to stop her. Unheeding his warning as before, she boldly persisted. Hardly had she gone a dozen steps when a breaker, rolling in, nearly swept her from the path. She retreated in dismay.

The spectator's face beamed with quiet gratification. "Shall I come for you?" he called, demurely.

"No!" The answer was prompt and emphatic.

Thereupon, without pressing the matter, he lighted his pipe, and sat down upon a neighboring rock.

Meantime the day was gone, the afterglow was fast fading from the west, and the prisoner presently began to grow anxious. Again and again she studied the situation, casting seaward and landward wistful, fruitless glances. There was no choice of resources.

At last, when his pipe was smoked out, and the opposite rock began to look like a silhouette against the gray of the sky, hearing no sign of relenting from the stubborn little maid, Steenie threw off his coat and shoes to go to her.

From his look of repressed amusement, it was plain he was thinking more of humbling his rebellious captive than of the task before him. His expression speedily changed. He found that he had undertaken a serious business. He had much ado, indeed, to keep his footing, and reached the outer rock somewhat spent in breath.

Drenched and trembling, Catalina stood awaiting him. With contrite promptness she now obeyed his directions. For him, such had been the sobering effects of the transit, he seemed quite to have forgotten his purpose of triumphing.

"Poor little Catalina," he said, gently, as he stretched forth his stalwart hand to help her down the slippery rock.

Cunning junker! That one touch of tenderness secured him a swifter triumph than the choicest store of gibes and sarcasm. Hiding her face upon his shoulder, the humbled maiden sobbed aloud.

But there was no time for condolence. Grasping his quaking little companion firmly by both hands, and bracing himself against the undertow, Steenie moved backward step by step along the well-known path.

On a level the water scarcely reached to his waist, but tossed about as it was, and reinforced by an occasional breaker, it seemed to Catalina of formidable depth. With gasping breath and suppressed cries of terror, she watched the combing billows bearing

down upon them in the darkness, and clung with desperate hold to her guide as the crest passed them by.

Bidding his terrified charge to hold fast and not be afraid, Steenie kept steadily on. A score of paces and the worst was over. The rest of the way was easy, and presently they came crawling up, safe and sound, out of the maelstrom. Mindful of their dripping state, Steenie was for putting his dry coat upon Catalina. Still gasping, she protested : —

“No! No!”

“’T is only till we reach your door.”

“No!”

“I can take it then myself.”

“You need to go home. You shall not go with me. I know the way for myself.”

“The dogs will hunt you for a drowned rat. Come.”

“No!”

“Why not, pray you?”

“I have well-nigh cost you life already.”

“What then?”

“’T is enough.”

“’T is nothing, so we henceforth swear a peace.”

He waited as if for an answer.

“Say, shall we be friends or no?” he persisted, holding out the coat.

Without a word she suddenly stooped, kissed one of his cold, wet hands, and ran away.

Several days afterwards, returning from the neighborhood of the fort, Steenie passed Dr. Staats’s house, and bethought him to ask after the fugitive.

Hearing voices in the garden, he loitered to peer over the fence, when a slave came to bid him enter,

the begum having seen him from the stoop, where she was at work behind the vines. •

Receiving him with every mark of distinction, the lady straightway proceeded to bewilder her guest with lavish and Oriental acknowledgment of his late service. Involved, iterated, and reiterated, her song of praise was rehearsed with fugue-like intricacy.

The junker had much ado to keep his face.

"'T was nothing," he said at last, in protest. "I but helped her over a deep place."

Disconcerted by this bald bit of prose after all her poetry, the lady studied her visitor attentively.

"I hope she got no harm from the soaking?" he asked.

"You shall see for yourself. Will it please you to come in?" she said, leading the way to the parlor.

Although the slave sent to summon her reported that she was in the garden, Catalina delayed an unconscionable time in coming.

Directly she appeared the cause of the delay was apparent. She had made a toilet.

The begum suffered a fleeting little look of surprise to run the guard of her controlling muscles upon noting this new freak of her harum-scarum daughter.

But if the mother was perplexed at her toilet, the visitor was more puzzled at her behavior. His surprise, moreover, was clearly not altogether an agreeable one; he evidently missed an expected entertainment.

Coming in, she lingered timorously upon the threshold; she courtesied with drooped eyes; she stood in much constraint while stammering forth her greeting:

"I hope you are well, Mynheer, after that — after what you went through?"

"Many thanks for your concern. Never fear for

me. I am neither sugar nor salt, to be hurt by a wetting. 'T is you should have dissolved, going home without a coat."

"I took no harm."

"So? All is then for the best. Have you heard, madam," turning to the begum with a quizzical air, "the outcome of our adventure yonder? Catalina and I have sworn a pact. From deadly foes we are become fast friends."

The mother looked with inquiring eyes at her daughter. Catalina flushed, but whether at the words or tone did not appear.

"Eh, is it not so?" demanded the visitor.

"I cannot say."

The questioner's face lighted up. Hopeful of having at last struck out an old-time spark of contradiction, he made haste to fan it.

"Confess, now."

"What shall I confess?"

"That we are fast friends."

"I know not if we be."

"Fie! Here's a pretty going back upon your word!" cried Steenie, with rising hope, as he drew his chair nearer to Catalina.

"There is no going back."

"What? Will you keep your promise?"

"Yes — no. I gave no promise."

Although these last few answers were scarcely audible on account of the growing embarrassment of the speaker, the pertinacious cross-examiner kept on.

"Will you tell me 't was all for nothing, our peace-making yonder on the rocks?"

"'T is not for me to tell."

"How then?"

"I — you — it is for time to show."

"A going back, — a plain going back. Madam, you shall judge."

The begum, however, proved an indifferent accomplice in badinage. Western humor bewildered her at best. Moreover, she was at the moment profoundly preoccupied with a new thought she had just conceived with regard to the pair before her.

Disconcerted by the grave look of the mother, Steenie turned back to the daughter, but the daughter had flown.

XIV.

FOR the second time in forty-eight hours chance had stepped in to save Hester from the penalty of her contumacy. All thoughts of lesser matters were naturally overborne in her father's mind by the astounding report just brought to him.

The report, moreover, proved true. It soon came out that the lieutenant-governor, finding his authority gone and seeing no means of regaining it, had been for several days quietly making arrangements for his flight.

Departing, he cast behind him a Parthian shaft; he left the government in solemn form to his three councillors. Had Leisler been gifted with a spark of humor, he would have smiled grimly at such child's play. In truth it filled him with needless rage.

Wrath, however, did not dim his political vision. He saw plainly the consequences of the flight. The whole situation was simplified. Directly the darkened sky cleared, and behold an horizon of possibility opened vast and wide before him. It was an hour of opportunity, of which, needless to say, not a moment was lost.

With the instinct of leadership, he recognized the instant need of fortifying his usurped authority by an appearance of popular sanction. With the directness and resistless energy of a born leader he carried out his purpose.

By a scratch of the pen he changed the name of the fort from "James" to "William." In a few rude, stirring words, void of grammar or coherence, he proclaimed the government vacant, and called a convention to organize a committee of safety, after the fashion of the Bostoneers.

"Men and brethren," he cried to the assembled delegates, "the trumpet of the Lord has sounded, and the hosts of the enemy are flying before us. He they called leader has stolen away like a coward, and deserted his post. The finger of God is in it. It means that the reign of tyrants and Papists is over, — over forever. We will have no more to do with Popes and their minions. We are left to our own guidance. In this hour of darkness the voice of the Lord has come to me, saying, 'Get ye up and do your duty!' I obey the call! I give up my business, I neglect my family, I waste my substance, — all for the good of my country. Ay," he went on, with uplifted arm and in a loftier strain, "like the great Cromwell, I have been called to save this people from tyrants and oppressors. As God is my witness, I will not fail ye! From this hour forth, by day and by night, I will hunt down your enemies. There shall be no more soft measures. *The sword henceforth must rule!*"

Electrified by these bold words, the astonished delegates answered by a mighty shout, which was caught up and prolonged by the expectant crowd without.

His eyes flaming, his strong voice swelling in triumph, the orator continued, —

"The sword, I say, must rule and shall rule until every Papist and aristocrat be driven from the land like that dog Nicholson, or sent to burn in hell fire whence they came! Take heed, then, ye do what

belongs to ye in this cause! Take heed ye uphold my arm! Go on speedily, and take such measures as are needful for the common good! Choose ye a committee like them in Boston yonder, who shall have charge to carry out such business as I commit to ye. Do your duty like men, and have no fear. I will see no harm comes to ye."

All the world knows the result of the convention. A committee was chosen for the general direction of affairs under the executive control of Leisler, who by a liberal construction of his powers speedily converted his trust into a virtual dictatorship.

But with no training in public affairs, Leisler found that the career he had started on abounded in snares and pitfalls; that instinct does not always avail in statecraft; that knowledge of laws, precedents, ways, and means does not necessarily go with usurped insignia of power. In vain he strove to cut his way through all these red-tape entanglements by force and violence. He stumbled and floundered at every step; he saw too late his own mistakes, and realized with bitterness the ridicule which his ignorance must inevitably awaken.

In this hour of his need, as if heaven-sent, came to him an ally. The whole world might have been ransacked in vain for a coadjutor more fit. Jacob Milborne proved a lieutenant after his own heart. Accomplished in all wherein Leisler was wanting, he straightway smoothed the path of technical obstructions, masked audacious innovation under a specious cloak of precedent, and saved the dictator from contempt by turning his ill-spelt, ungrammatical bombast into sound sense and good English.

Nor was this all, — he proved an inspiration as well

as a guide. Born with the itch of revolution and an intolerance of conservatism in his blood, he threw himself heart and soul into the new movement, spurred Leisler on to swifter and bolder progress, and confirmed his wavering faith in the reality of his mission.

What welcome was warm enough for such a man ! Leisler did what he could. He treated him with distinction, clothed him with authority, and took him home to his own hearth-stone as an honored member of the household.

Finding such great, essential qualities in his new helpmeet, Leisler could well afford to shut his eyes to little shortcomings. It is indeed much to be doubted whether he was ever aware of such petty drawbacks as a soured disposition, an embittered tongue, a morose and forbidding aspect, in his accomplished lieutenant. If the other members of his family made any such discovery, be sure they kept their own counsel, neither caring nor daring to run counter to a personage who speedily became next to the head of the household in authority.

As for Milborne, never before in his checkered career had he met with such appreciation. But he was too shrewd to betray himself. He accepted this hospitality, and took his place in the household without any qualms of delicacy. Moreover, as week after week he found himself more firmly established in the favor of his host, he began to realize the value of his own services, and in due time disclosed a purpose of putting a price upon them.

It all came about very gradually and as the natural outgrowth of the situation. Milborne was not likely to act upon impulse, and there is even reason to be-

lieve he took much time mulling over the matter after it developed in his mind.

A wanderer as he had been upon the face of the earth for so many years, lonely, unsuccessful, friendless, he first discovered the worth of a home and a family circle under Leisler's roof-tree. He naturally began to ask himself if it were too late to set up household gods of his own. Pondering the subject, his gloomful eyes rested upon Mary Leisler. The blooming maiden came and went about her daily tasks, duteous, cheerful, helpful, unconsciously approving herself more and more every day to the watchful elderly eyes of her father's friend.

It may be taken as a proof of the esteem in which he held his guest that Leisler showed neither surprise nor disapproval when the matter was broached to him.

It was not, indeed, a time for him to nurse scruples. Affairs were at a crisis. Notwithstanding the temporary success he had met with, his position was critical. He was hedged about with doubts and dangers. The men he could count upon were few. Here was a chance of binding to his cause an invaluable ally by the double bond of interest and relationship. There is reason enough to believe he welcomed it with eagerness.

His own mind made up, he looked upon the thing as settled. Bluntly, therefore, without preface or preliminary, he broached the matter to Mary.

Consternation at the moment kept the astonished girl silent, while her father went on and discussed the advantages of the union. Thinking, however, that in the end she would assuredly be left free to exercise her own choice in so momentous a business, she waited until such time as she could collect her wits and sum-

mon resolution to frame a reply which should not unduly affront her father and his powerful friend.

What, then, was her alarm to find, upon consultation with her mother, that her consent had been assumed as a matter of course, and that preparations were actually on foot for her marriage with this elderly and morose suitor, who had never spoken a word of love to her, and whom she secretly feared and disliked.

Panic-stricken, she appealed to her mother to put a stop to the business. But Vrouw Leisler, dearly as she loved her daughter, was not in a frame of mind for impartial judgment. She had already been convinced of the wisdom and expedience of the step by her infallible guide.

All other resource failing, Mary turned to her younger sister. She was dismayed at the counsel received. Reasonable as it might be from the standpoint of right and justice, it was shocking to her instincts of reverence, to her training of subordination. In her vacillation she adopted a middle course; she tried propitiation. Hester, as it chanced, stood by when Mary put her head in the lion's mouth, and the incident is of value here solely for its memorable effect upon the witness.

Mary chose a time when her father was smoking his pipe in the chimney-nook, after supper, to make her appeal.

"What, ei? ye would not have him? A man of age, of experience, of good habits, of comfortable estate,—as I shall see to it,—is not good enough for ye?"

"No — no; 't is not that; he is far too good, he—"

"'T is his own lookout, that."

"But, father, if it please you,—I am so young."

"That's a fault will mend itself, never fear."

"Yet I—I doubt if I can content so worshipful a gentleman."

"Do your best, — do your best, child, and leave the rest to Providence."

"He is so old —"

"Not older than I."

"He will look for great wisdom in a wife."

"Then must he bear his disappointment as I did."

"But —"

"Pish! say no more; 't is settled; he has my word."

"But I have no love for him."

"Ei! no love for Milborne? 'T is something in the order of a milksop would stir your liking, I warrant me. Poh! poh! women's gabble! Respect and obey him, — 't is enough to begin with. The rest will follow when ye once come under the yoke."

"But, father, I pray you —" began the sobbing girl.

"Say no more. He shall come himself to talk to ye."

"No! no! no! let him not come! I cannot have him, — I will never marry him!" she concluded, in a passionate outburst.

"By the Lord, but ye shall! Ye shall, I say, and straightway too. Go to your mother and get ready your duds. The day shall be fixed before the sun goes down!"

"Father, — oh, father!"

"He is too good for ye. I pity him to marry such a fool. But such as ye are, ye shall be his wife before the week is out, mark that! Go to your mother! I have no time to spend with your whimses."

XV.

WITH so fair a showing of legal right upon their side, it must not be thought that the party at the Stadthuys stood idly looking on at the changes taking place in the province. They did what was in them. They played the part of feebleness, and irresolution to the end. They failed not to be wise and bold after the event. Laying futile plots, nursing ineffectual rage, and cursing their ill luck, they waited supinely for Providence to come to their relief.

And so verily at last it did, — or seemed to. One fine day there arrived a messenger from Boston, bearing a royal proclamation under the sign-manual of the new sovereigns, confirming in office all Protestant incumbents throughout the provinces. The proclamation, dated months before, had been heedlessly withheld in Boston; the result was a revolution in New York.

Here at last was an end of Leisler and his domination. Here was a fiat of the royal lieges whom he himself acknowledged and had so eagerly proclaimed, leaving him without a pretext for further meddling in public affairs, and relegating him to his dingy liquor-shop in the dock.

To their credit be it said, Mynheer Van Cortlandt and his fellow-councillors lost no further time in inaction. For a moment, as it seemed, they rose to the level of statesmanship. In his capacity of Mayor, Van Cortlandt called together the aldermen and citizens,

and showed them that he could, on occasion, read a proclamation without duress. Speedily the summer breeze blew the echoes of these doings down to the fort. To show how little he was intimidated by the rustle of parchment and the vain wind of words, Leisler straightway flew into a rage, warned the people of another plot, and dubbed the three worshipful gentlemen "popishly affected, lying dogs," — an epithet bearing strong internal evidence of genuineness, even if history had not scrupulously set down for us the exact phrase.

But the three were used to loud words from the fort ; they doubtless were prepared for some such outburst at first. They may have taken secret gratification in it ; their victory would indeed have been barren without some sign that the stab had reached the quick. With a just confidence they went on, therefore, to exercise the powers confirmed to them. The first step was to get control of the public funds. Forthwith they thrust out the old collector, and put in a commission with Bayard at the head.

It directly appeared how much their proclamation had availed. Within an hour down came a file of soldiers from the fort, and drove them all out with such violence that Bayard barely escaped with his life. Indeed, hearing during the day that further mischief was intended him, the colonel, under cover of night, stole away to Albany.

Here, then, was a short and sharp lesson for the worshipful councillors upon the difference in effect between governments *de jure* and *de facto*. Lest any misgivings on the subject still lingered in their minds, others were speedily to follow.

But what need of rehearsing familiar history ?

The fast following events of those changeful days are well known, — how Mynheer Van Cortlandt, when the time came about, was forbidden to hold his mayor's court; how, soon after, he was thrust out of office entirely by the election of a successor; how Madam Van Cortlandt, in the absence of her husband, refused to give up the city seal and insignia, defying Leisler and slamming the door in the face of his threatening emissary; how, in the midst of all, Albany sent frantic appeals for aid in the Indian war; how Leisler, seeing his chance, posted off Milborne with a strong detachment, not to fight Indians, but to bring the stanch little frontier town under his control; how Bayard, a refugee in the town, warned the citizens and defeated his purpose; how soon and how bitterly the bold colonel repented his interference, when, stealing back to New York to visit the bedside of his dying son, he was hunted out of town like a rat, and well-nigh paid the penalty with his life; how, enraged at their failure to find the fugitive, the maddened troopers, looking about for another victim, bethought them of the hapless ex-mayor, who, warned in time, slunk out of his garden gate and fled for asylum to Connecticut.

Thus one by one the old councillors were gone, scattered to the four winds: Nicholson in England, Philipse hiding in his country retreat, Bayard and Van Cortlandt suppliant refugees in Albany and Connecticut.

At last Leisler breathed freely. There was no one left to dispute his authority. Not on this account did he for a moment relax his energies. He strengthened his government and kept alive the zeal of his followers by the most extraordinary measures. He filled the air with startling rumors. Wanting facts, he scrupled

not to resort to fiction. No hereditary monarch born in the purple, or diplomate trained in the schools, ever showed a greater skill in coloring truths or inventing fables than this same ingenuous deacon.

The field at home being cleared, it was time to give a thought to foreign relations. With the insidious Nicholson in London pouring what slanders he would into the king's ear there was danger of the royal mind being poisoned, and Joost Stoll must be sent off post-haste to prevent it. Honest Joost was not an ideal figure for an ambassador, but it was Hobson's choice. Milborne could not be spared, and there was nobody else who could be trusted; for the doughty ensign, if not learned or polished, or even very intelligent, was at least loyal to his heart's core.

Meantime an investigation was on foot as to how Bayard and Van Cortlandt had both so successfully evaded the troopers and effected their escape. As the field narrowed, suspicion pointed to Steenie.

Warned in time by a note sent to his mother, — a note written in lines as delicate as a spider's web, and bearing no signature, — the junker got away in safety, but, as it proved, not a moment too soon. The next day the Van Cortlandt mansion resounded with the curses of his chagrined pursuers.

Leaving at such short notice, there was no time to see Hester. Passing the Van Dorn bouwerie, however, he bethought him of Tryntje, and hastily scribbling a few lines on a leaf of his pocketbook, he stopped and handed the crumpled note to the trusty huysvrouw, with a word of caution. Her silent nod inspired him with confidence that it would reach its destination.

Tryntje justified this confidence; she lost no time

in executing her errand. It chanced one day, not long after Steenie's escape, that Ensign Stoll, busy with preparation for his foreign mission, saw the dame trudging before him along the Strand. He knew at once she was going to Leisler's. Thinking nothing of it at first, her odd behavior presently drew his attention. Arriving at the house, she passed the stoop, paused, cast a cautious look about, and slipping quickly through the garden gate shut it carefully behind her.

The suspicious ensign hastened at once to the spot, and peeped over the high wall. Perhaps he felt a moment's mortification upon seeing her walk quietly to the kitchen door and hand in a basket of eggs. If so, his triumph was the greater, a few moments later, upon beholding the pretended egg-peddler hurriedly exchange signals with some unseen watcher at an upper window, draw a letter from her bosom, and hide it quickly in the thick foliage of a flowering shrub.

Stoll's worst suspicions were confirmed; Hester was, then, in communication with the refugee, or, worse still, here was another popish plot.

Returning to the fort, he went at once to report the whole matter to the commander-in-chief; but that busy person was occupied with more momentous business, and could not be disturbed. Preparations for his mission to England, meantime, so engrossed the ensign's attention that nearly a week went by before he made his report. As may be imagined, Leisler was highly incensed.

That very day, as it turned out, while returning home from the fort, he came upon Tryntje in the street. The discreet vrouw affected not to see him,

and would have passed without a salute but that the captain, enraged at sight of her, bawled out: —

“Here, ye, stop! Stop, I say! ’Tis ye, is it, teaches that hussy of a girl to disobey? Hark ye, a word in your ear. If I find ye sneaking about my house again, — mark now what I say! — as hell owns ye, I’ll have ye whipped at the cart’s tail!”

To the amazement of the arrogant captain, who latterly brooked no opposition to his supreme will, this scrap of womankind turned upon him, and, her white-gray eyes flashing with a spirit as fierce as his own, cried: —

“Will ye? Will ye so? Try it an’ ye dare? Shame, shame upon ye, to keep your own child shut up like a malefactor, and for nothing!”

“Silence, ye bitch!”

“That will I not. Who are ye to stop my mouth, — who but old Jacob Leisler that sold brande-wyn in the dock? And who made ye anything better? Ye are taking great airs and manners. Wait! Wait till the king hears of ye!”

“Away! Away with her to the stocks!” roared Leisler to the crowd that was rapidly gathering.

“I’ll leave the print of my nails on the man who dares!” retorted the dauntless vrouw, fairly quivering with rage. “Mark, old hog-driver! ye shall know what one vrouw thinks, and many another too, if they dared but speak their minds.”

“Will nobody seize her, — will nobody take her, I say?” thundered Leisler, glaring about upon the crowd.

But none of his retainers were at hand, and it was only too plain that the sympathies of the bystanders were with the woman.

"No, that will they not," went on the virago, boldly taking a stride towards Leisler, and shaking her bony finger as she talked. "They are honest men. There's none of your thieves and rascals here to do your bidding. Ye're afraid of a woman, one woman, when ye have not your bullies at hand to protect ye. But ye shall hear the truth!"

"Have done, — have done, ye hag, or by —"

He paused, and lifted the heavy hilt of his sword as if to strike.

"Do!" cried the transported vrouw, advancing upon him tauntingly with arms akimbo. "Strike, strike, ye butcher! ye brawler! ye peace-breaker, tyrant, and hog-driver! Bah-h-h! a deacon, an elder, a teacher in the house of the Lord! — Out upon ye!"

"Away with her, I say!" cried Leisler, fairly choking with rage.

"I tell ye a day of judgment is coming. Think not to escape; ye shall pay for your wickedness."

At this moment the sound of heavy footsteps and the clanking of weapons were heard down the street. Recognizing the familiar tramp of his men-at-arms, Leisler called aloud for them to come to his aid.

"Ei! Ei! Call for help, big brat! shout! split your throat! Ye tremble! ye're afraid of one woman! Afraid, I say!" she repeated, drawing still nearer, and with a look so threatening that the perplexed commander involuntarily shrank back. "Ah-h-h, I have a mind to tear your eyes!"

Happily for the dignity and safety of the luckless official, several soldiers came bursting through the crowd at this juncture.



"Take this she-devil, and give her the ducking-stool!"

"Take this she-devil," gasped Leisler, "and give her the ducking-stool! Now, — now, at once! Take her, I say, and duck her till her damned tongue can never wag again!"

Startled at first by the unexpected order, and doubtful perhaps of their right to usurp the functions of the schout, the soldiers hesitated. Presently, however, fearful of exciting still more the wrath of their outraged captain, they seized and dragged away the defiant Tryntje, who continued to scold vociferously all the way to the dock.

So vigorous, moreover, was the resistance of the wiry, determined little woman that it required the combined efforts of four strong men to carry out the captain's order.

Close upon the edge of the dock the instrument of torture stood ready. It was a simple contrivance, consisting of a stout plank laid across a block. To the end of the long arm of the lever overhanging the water was fixed a stool, upon which, after a long struggle, Tryntje was securely lashed.

At a given signal she was plunged into the water. Coming up gasping and choking, she no sooner caught her breath than she used it with vigor in bitterly upbraiding her tormentors, calling down upon them and their master the heaviest curses of Heaven.

Cheered by the crowd, the plucky vrouw continued the unequal contest as long as she could speak. Even at the end it was only the flesh which succumbed.

Down, and down, and down again she was plunged, until, exhausted by the repeated shocks, she sank half-lifeless in her seat.

Then only they released her. Willing hands, a score or more, were stretched forth from the crowd to

support the hapless creature as she came staggering up the dock, her clothes dripping, her lank hair falling on her shoulders, her eyes sunken, her skin blue and corpse-like ; while a hoarse murmur of disgust and indignation followed Leisler's henchmen as they moved away, which would have sounded ominously in ears not deaf to all signs and portents.

XVI.

ONE evening, several weeks after her son's escape, Madam Van Cortlandt received a visit. Going into the parlor, she found there a small woman, closely veiled.

"I am Gertryd Van Cortlandt."

The stranger saluted with a deep reverence.

"What is your business?" inquired Madam, bluntly.

"It is only for your own ears."

"There is no other here," said the lady of the house, standing erect before her visitor, with no very hospitable aspect.

"You are the mother of the tall junker?"

"And if I be?"

"He is driven from home by —" looking around with an air of caution — "yonder ruffian."

"So is his father, so are his friends, and tomorrow it may be my own turn," burst forth Madam, bitterly.

"I hear it all, — I see it all. 'Tis a great wickedness."

"You know more of me than I of you," said Madam, not without a touch of suspicion.

"Look, now!" exclaimed the stranger, throwing off her veil.

"The wife of Dr. Staats?"

"Yes."

"Your husband is in league with those yonder."

"Yes. The madness seized upon him. He would not heed me. He is drawn on by that babbler. They

go to their ruin. But," with an impatient gesture, "we will not talk of them; 'tis the junker."

"And what of him?"

"He is in danger," lowering her voice, and laying her hand on the mother's arm.

"How know you that?" asked the lady of the house, drawing back with increased distrust.

"I know it; 'tis enough. I have not time to talk. I must not be missed at home. The junker saved my life."

"I never heard of it."

"No, he makes no account of it, but *I* keep it always here," tapping her forehead, "and it is a good time now to remember."

"So!" exclaimed Madam, guardedly, her eyes darkening with interest.

"They hunt for him. They hunt for them all, — this way, that way, days, nights, always."

"What then?"

"There comes to-day a — a —" halting for a word — "a noise that they are near."

"Ahem!" Some recreant muscle gives way, and a tell-tale flush creeps slowly over the listener's face.

"Hereabouts, mark you!"

"I cannot say."

"No, no," nodded the begum, as approving the caution, "you know nothing, but," uplifting her dusky face, and whispering with dilated eyes, "bid some bird go find them out and tell them, 'Lie close to-night.'"

"What are the devils at now?" burst out the startled matron.

A noise of footsteps and a murmur of voices in the street interrupted them. The begum looked ner-

rously around, and dropped her veil. Directly the sound died away she rose to take leave.

"What is this you tell me?" asked the anxious mother. "What is on foot? Give me something to act upon."

"There is danger,—danger all about, like a tiger in the jungle. Now it crouches to spring. You are warned,—it is enough. Go speed your bird. Bid him spread his wings *to the north*," with a significant look. "Every minute lost is sorrow."

With a quick obeisance, half-salaam, half-courtesy, the speaker turned to go. Madam followed to the door, fruitlessly protesting. In the shadow of the stoop outside she saw a slave waiting.

"Stay, you have no lantern."

"No, no. The darkness is a friend," and slipping out, the little figure was directly lost in the gloom.

That night a supper-party was assembled in the Philipse manor. The cloth had been removed; a huge punch-bowl, flanked by a tray of glasses, stood in the midst of the heavy oaken table. The guests sat about, smoking pipes and talking, but plainly in no convivial mood.

Outside not a ray of light broke the darkness. The wind held high carnival. Shutters, doors, window-casements, hay-ricks, fences, dead limbs, and withered leaves, each and all played some creaking, shrieking, rattling, banging part in the great wind-symphony, while the cavernous chimneys, like huge bassoons, softened the discord with perpetual roar.

The host and one of his guests had stepped out on the stoop for a weather prognosis. They came in talking.

"Not yet, not yet,—the time is not ripe," said Philipse, expostulating against some suggestion. "Let him run his course."

"What, stand and look on while he lays waste our estates and murders our families?"

"It will never come to that, colonel, never fear. He is at the end of his rope already. The people will not bear it much longer."

Bayard turned; it was the ex-mayor who had joined the pair.

"Bear it!" he said. "Will they not? They are a flock of sheep without a bell-wether. They dare not stir while the dog stands over them with his band of cut-throats."

"They will stir in due time; have patience," said Philipse, calmly. "Wait. The evil will work its own cure."

"Wait!" The tone was frankly contemptuous. "Wait until the brutal boor has scourged, imprisoned, or driven away every honest man from the place,—until he has destroyed the city and laid waste the province!"

"What would *you*, then, advise?" It was a fourth who chimed in, as they resumed their seats about the table.

"Well put, French. What would *you* do, colonel? Let us have everybody's voice. 'Tis that we are here for."

"I would get together a hundred stout fellows, meet outside the walls on the first dark night, overpower the guard, make a rush on the fort, and seize the hog in his sty. One bold dash and the day is ours."

Steenie, sitting at the foot of the board, leaned

forward, with glistening eyes. His blood was stirred by these bold words.

Philipse shook his head, and puffed his pipe with an air of forbearance. It was Van Cortlandt who spoke : —

“ ’T is not so easy. The fellow knows his danger. Day and night he is on the alert. Every approach is doubly guarded. A surprise is impossible.”

“ March down, then, in open daylight, with banners flying, and fight it out to the death,” said the colonel, recklessly.

“ Let us talk sense, and act like men,” returned the mayor, coldly. “ I have come latest from town. I made a study of things there, as I had good cause to do. I know the rascal’s strength and the hold he has on the people. Bear this in mind, — ’t is better not to move at all than to fail. It is our failures thus far that have put him where he is.”

“ And is it your voice, too, that we should wait, that we should lie skulking in holes while this mad-man runs his course ?” asked Bayard, with a sneer.

“ We need not skulk. There is plenty to do. We may help on the work. ’T is our part to set in train every influence which may avail to bring him down.”

“ And where, pray, be these mysterious influences ? What but knock-down blows can bring this rascal to reason ? ”

“ Seeing the province fall away from him ; seeing his power crumble to pieces ; finding himself without money to pay his train-bands ; hearing that the other colonies are finding him out, that the king knows the truth, and that a new governor has been appointed.”

“ Vastly fine ; but before a tithe of this is done,

will he not, think ye, have the whole province under his heel? Will he not have money enough by the sale of our estates? Will he not have increased his following by enlisting every idle fellow in the province, while we and our friends, every man who has the wit to see through him and the will to withstand him, must choose betwixt submission and the dungeon?"

"Poh! Poh! The work is already half done to our hands."

"What is done but talk? Not an honest blow has been struck."

"And if he work his own ruin, what need for blows? Set a hog swimming,—'t is an old saw,—and he will cut his own throat."

The colonel made a gesture of impatience.

"Bethink you, Bayard, of the Canadian expedition. What is thought of him in Connecticut and the Massachusetts after that?"

"What matters it what's thought of him there?"

"Much! He will look in vain for aid and countenance in those quarters."

"Think, too, how he must tremble at every ship sighted from London."

"Poh! he laughs at any danger from that source, and well he may."

"Why, then, did he post that fool of an ensign off to England in such haste? He knew Nicholson had the king's ear."

"Little good 't will do Nicholson or us. The king is too unsteady in his seat and has too much to do near at hand to bother his head about the colonies. He will leave us to ourselves."

"What more do we want?" asked French.

"Can you not see, colonel, the discontent is deepening every day?"

"No, that can I not."

"Why, sir, the farmers of Long Island are already in open revolt. Did he not have to send his bullies to Hempstead only yesterday, to put down a riot over gathering the tax?"

"Yes, and another troop went the day before to Jamaica on the same business."

"And another still to Flushing."

The suggestions came pouring in from all around the board.

"I tell you the fire is spreading," summed up the ex-mayor, with an air of authority.

"How spreading, when he stamps it out at the first puff of smoke?"

"He does not stamp it out; he cannot. 'Tis getting beyond his control; he gives signs of panic already."

"And well he may; keeping all those hulking loafers at his heels is costly business; he must feed and pay them."

"And for that he must have money."

"Which he has not; he is at his wits' end already."

"And goes any length to come by a stuyver."

The colonel answered the temporizing chorus only by a look of disdain.

"Did you hear his new laws?"

"Ay, now there is a case in point."

"Was there ever heard the like?"

"You know them, colonel?"

"No," answered Bayard, with indifference.

"Listen, then!" said Van Cortlandt, taking a paper

from his pocket and reading. "First and foremost he levies a direct tax for the support of the garrison."

"'T is that raised all the pother among the farmers."

"And no wonder; what need have they for a garrison?"

"Next," went on the ex-mayor, "he commands all persons who have left the province to return within three weeks, under pains and penalties."

"That is levelled at us."

"And if we come not back —"

"He seizes our estates."

"Dog!"

"Beast!"

"Thief!"

"Wait! Patience, gentlemen, if you would hear what trick this new Hampden, this second Cromwell, this prophet and deliverer of his country, is at! Wait, I say!" continued the reader, going on with his paper. "Any one refusing a civil or military commission under him shall be fined seventy-five pounds."

"'T is to get more money."

"How is that?"

"He will appoint *us* to offices: Philipse shall be master of the whipping-post, Bayard the hog-reeve, and I — 't is doubtful if he has anything for me, unless the place of hangman's varlet be haply vacant; then if we delay to accept these favors, mark ye!"

"He collects the fines out of our estates."

"See you?"

"Any one leaving Albany or Nieuw Utrecht," went on Van Cortlandt from his paper, "'without permission, to be fined one hundred pounds.'"

"'T is easy to see the drift of that."

"Easy indeed; 't is to provide other fields when the crop of rich men here fails him."

"'And all persons,'" resumed the reader, "'who have left those counties must return within fourteen days, at their utmost peril.'"

"Yes," said Philipse, knocking the ashes from his pipe, "'t is a scheme to plunder us in cold blood. These laws are aimed at the men of substance amongst us. Every man with an estate tempts his greed, and he will have it, by hook or crook."

"Right," chimed in Nichols, "and what escapes the colander will stop at the sieve."

"Yet in the face of all this," cried Bayard, jumping from his seat and striding up and down the room, "ye say, 'Wait'! In the face of all this ye would stand here like a flock of bleating lambs and wait,—wait for the coming of the wolf! *I say*," he went on, striking the table with his clinched fist, "we've had waiting enough. *I say* the man is a fool or a coward who waits another hour. We are driven from our homes. We are hiding in holes like wolves. We come together in fear and trembling, under cover of night to take counsel, and all your cry is 'Wait'! *I say*," he concluded, in stentorian tones, "begin to act, to do something! *I say*, let our watchword be war,—war to the death! *I say*, let us take an oath here and now to stand up and give blow for blow!"

A look of conscious shame showed itself in the faces of the little group at these accusing words. The host and the ex-mayor, the natural leaders of the party, shifted uneasily in their seats, but did not speak.

The awkward silence was broken at last by Steenie,

who, sitting in the background, started suddenly from his seat with an exclamation.

"Hark!"

"Eh?"

"What was that?"

All listened, but nothing could be heard save the creaking framework of the house and the roaring wind in the vast chimneys.

Presently Philipse, with his usual air of deliberation, broke silence:—

"I quite agree with the colonel."

Naturally everybody looked astonished.

"This rascal should be put down. This robbery should be stopped. I have a vital interest in the matter. I want to see it done. The only question is how to do it. Cut off from our homes,—I am left this retreat as yet, but to-morrow may see me driven forth,—cut off from our friends and supplies, what chance have we to work? Let the colonel tell us as plain, practical men, what there is we can do!"

"That I will," returned Bayard promptly. "You shall have it in a nutshell. Get together a force of men able to put down this fellow and crush out his following!"

"And how is such an army to be come by?"

"Not by sitting here sucking thumbs. By bestirring ourselves; by going about through the whole province, wherever discontent has appeared, and winning the people over. Once set the ball going and it will roll of itself. Then call on Albany and Connecticut to join!"

"It sounds fair," observed Philipse thoughtfully, "but more promising schemes have come to naught.

Bethink you, colonel, if we fail, we are in a worse plight than before."

"We shall not fail, for come the worst to the worst," muttered the colonel, "there are the French and the savages!"

A murmur ran around the circle at this dark innuendo.

"Why not? Can we be worse off? On the one side there is sure ruin; on the other there is a chance."

"But why think of failure?" asked French of the chief objector.

"And so I would not, could I but see any good prospect of success," answered Van Cortlandt, walking away to bask before the open fire.

"Listen, gentlemen," said Bayard, drawing his chair up to the table, and emphasizing his words by sharp taps of his gold snuff-box upon the polished oak; "hearken to me a minute! I ask no great matters of you. I will undertake the brunt of the work. Only pledge me your support. Hold yourselves bound to pay all needful charges and draw your swords for the final fray, and I will answer for the result."

"No, colonel, you shall not hold me so lukewarm in the matter," spoke up Philipse, his ice of caution melting before Bayard's enthusiasm. "I am willing to take my share both of toil and danger."

"And count upon me to do and dare anything in the cause!" cried Van Cortlandt, yielding to the impulse which fired the little group.

"And me!"

"And me!"

"And I, Colonel Bayard, will go with you to raise the army!" exclaimed Steenie, starting up.

"You shall, boy!" said the colonel, laying his hand affectionately on the junker's shoulder.

"So! the tide is turned. Fill up,—fill up, gentlemen! Here's victory to our cause! That dog has had his day. Before a month has passed—I ask but thirty days, mind ye—I will sweep the province clear of him and his pack. Again! fill again, and let it be a bumper!"

Amidst this pledging of healths and clinking of glasses a servant in the doorway strove in vain to make himself heard.

"The troopers!"

"Eh?"

"Run! run! they're upon us!"

To confirm the man's words the heavy tramp of horses' feet was heard outside upon the lawn.

There was a scramble for the door. The host, through real or affected contempt of the danger, stood by his post; the guests stayed not upon the order of their going. Seizing their hats and cloaks as they rushed through the hall, they made the best of their way by the back stairs to the kitchen door, whence, guided by a servant, they slipped away through the thick shrubbery towards the river, where a boat was in waiting.

Half-way downstairs, Bayard, thinking of some forgotten detail of his scheme, turned back for a last word with his host.

The front door resounded with blows from halberds and sabres, as the colonel whispered his hurried charge to Philipse. Familiar with the house, however, he took his time, and coolly groped his way to the back entrance. Here, smiling at thought of the futile rage of his pursuers on missing their prey, he

folded his heavy cloak about him and stepped forth into the pitchy darkness.

Directly he was seized by two stout men-at-arms, and despite a vigorous resistance he was quickly disarmed, bound, and led away in triumph.

XVII.

STEENIE gone, there was no longer any restraint upon Hester's movements; she could come and go at her will within the bounds of the city walls. This limit to her wanderings would seem to have cut off all communication with the bouwerie; but notwithstanding the vigilance of the sentinels at the gates and the severe experience of the ducking-stool, there is not wanting evidence that Vrouw Van Dorn knew more than she chose to tell of certain messages and letters which had much to do with keeping up Hester's hope and spirits.

Save for this trial of separation, life in the Strand had latterly been more tolerable. Her father and his lieutenant had been too much taken up with public matters to heed things at home. Often they went away at daybreak, and only came back at nightfall, when, worn out by cares of state, they ate heavily at supper, and directly afterward fell asleep over their pipes on either side the chimney.

After a time, however, there came, as it seemed, a lull in public business. Directly the saturnine suitor bethought him of his long-interrupted nuptials. He spoke to Leisler, who at once took up the matter with his wonted energy and pushed on the preparations.

Accustomed now for some months to the thought which had at first been so shocking, and overcome by the masterful will of her father, Mary resigned herself to the inevitable. Without further tears or murmurs

she gave the implied assent of silence, unconsciously adding a last element of pathos to the occasion by taking a chief part in decking herself for the sacrifice.

The simple preparations were soon made. The day came, and a gloomful day enough. Not a gleam of sunshine pierced the leaden sky. A puffy wind filled the narrow street with clouds of dust, and drove the melting snow — when at last it came — in dank masses against the window-panes.

Indoors things were no better. Vrouw Leisler had much ado to keep a brave front. Not to have Dominie Selyns marry the pair was the first blow and a cruel disappointment. Again, certain of their old friends and neighbors whom she had ventured to bid to the feast had coldly declined. In despair, the poor vrouw went weeping to her husband for advice. He supplied her with a haphazard list of guests from his coadjutors at the fort.

Vainly the fond mother strove to give a touch of gladness and cheer to the festival despite all these depressing circumstances. Well and faithfully she had done her part. The house shone with cleanliness; the family, slaves included, were in holiday dress. Her own harrowed face, however, looked grotesquely incongruous with her wedding finery. Small comfort she took in her quilted puce silken petticoat embroidered in silver filigree, her crape samare, her ponderous rings and necklace, and the heavy gold chatelaine still carefully preserved by her descendants.

At the last minute Leisler came stalking home from the fort, with dress more than usually disordered, and a bevy of guests at his heels in much the same guise.

Five o'clock sounded, and the little company were at last assembled in the best room. Huge logs blazed

in the open fireplace and long candles burned in the sconces, for the short winter's day was already at an end.

The bride was presently led in by her mother. She was a thought pale, but showed none of the nervousness proper to the moment. On the contrary, she gazed about on the company with an apathetic look, as if not quite clear why they were gathered. Dressed in a blue jacket over a scarlet petticoat of fine cloth, with her fair hair brushed back under a close cap, a massive gold necklace wound twice about her throat, and an embroidered purse garnished with silver ornaments hanging at her side, she presented the spectacle at once of a typical Dutch bride and a most fair and winsome young creature.

So, plainly enough, thought the waiting groom, as he regarded her from under his shaggy eyebrows; and for a moment a gnarled smile unsettled his severe features.

The hour had come and all was ready, but where was the dominie? Another bad omen. Vrouw Leisler glanced anxiously at her husband, who muttered curses under his breath.

"Give him time," said the groom, patiently; "'tis a long ferriage, and both wind and tide are against him."

Leisler chafed, and the guests glanced dubiously at each other. It was an awkward moment, but happily not a long one. The dominie soon arrived, cold, wet, and bedraggled. No time was lost in explanations and apologies. He was given a glass of grog and reminded of the hour. At an impatient nod from Leisler, the waiting pair came forward and the family gathered about.

At the first word of the service Hester clutched her sister by the hand, as if to drag her away ; but Mary, with a stony, unmoved look, quietly released herself, and turned back to the dominie.

Solemnly the good man droned through his formulas, his prayer, and his long admonition, and at last with fitting unction pronounced the fateful words "man and wife."

To the dismay of the gratified groom, Hester broke into loud sobs when she went up to kiss the bride. Vrouw Leisler's overstrained nerves could bear no more, and she straightway followed suit in a flood of tears. Leisler sternly thrust them both aside, and made room for the guests to offer their congratulations.

Happily the call to supper was not delayed. It was a merciful relief. Here, at least, was abundant material for good cheer. The hospitable dame had set forth a plentiful and tempting repast. Here were huge roasts of beef, pork, and venison. Here were boiled fowls and oysters. Here were bowls of smoking suppen. Here were heaped plates of olykoecken, pannekoecken, and sweetmeats. Here were heavy glittering glass decanters filled with Antigua rum, Fiall passado, sack, and old madeira. Here was a huge china bowl of fragrant brandy-punch. In short, no delicacy known to the time and proper to her state was wanting to the good vrouw's wedding-feast, and all had been prepared under her own eye and direction.

However much a relief, the supper added little of real cheer to the occasion. The guests, although restrained by their simple notions of decency from falling upon the food with latter-day voracity, yet gave their thoughts wholly to their trenchers. Not a

smile, not a jest, not a strain of music lightened the gloom. The host, unconscious of what he ate, brooded over all with a severe aspect; and presently, when a slave appeared with a brass chafing-dish filled with live coals, he lighted his pipe as a signal for his guests, and drew away the groom to talk over a packet which had just come to hand from the Massachusetts.

"What make ye of that?" he asked, pointing to a clause in the letter.

Milborne read aloud:—

"And well you know what good reason we have to wish well to your cause, but beg you to have a care not to carry matters with too high a hand, but to *temper justice with moderation and mercy, since the king's own settlement of the matter is so near at hand.*"

"Fudge!" said Milborne, handing back the letter. "Whence got they news of the king's own settlement of the matter? He settled it long ago by leaving you in charge; when any other settlement is made, be sure 't will not come to us by way of Boston."

Leisler nodded, and his brows relaxed.

"As for the rest of their sermon,—be you content with justice, and leave mercy to the Lord. What you have got by the strong hand, hold fast, and let these cavillers prate!"

While Leisler was considering this advice, a slave came groping his way through the thick clouds of tobacco smoke, to say that a child was at the outer door, demanding to see him.

"Go fetch him in. And ye," he continued, turning to Milborne as the slave disappeared, "get back to your bride and your festivities."

The groom, nothing loath, obeyed; while his father-

in-law, draining a neglected glass of punch in his hand, sat down in the broad window-seat to refill his pipe.

In a few moments the slave reappeared with a dripping little figure, looking like a half-drowned rat.

"What want ye with me, my lad?" asked the captain, gruffly, as he puffed at his kindling pipe.

Directly the child burst into a violent fit of weeping.

"How now?" What's here? Ei, 't is Stoll's brat! What's the matter, young one?" continued the questioner, not unkindly.

"Little Joost is dy-ying, and mother bids you come to her."

"So! so!" A look of concern softened the man's harsh features, and taking the sobbing child in his arms he tenderly kissed him. "Stay you here, my boy, with my good vrouw! She will give you some cakes and sweetmeats, and I will go to the mother. Come, now! Come now, little man, I say, cry no more; here is Vrouw Leisler."

Giving the child over to his wife with some hurried directions, Leisler threw on his cloak and hat, and strode away through the storm to Joost Stoll's humble dwelling.

He found Vrouw Stoll, her face haggard with anxiety, her eyes swollen with weeping, bending over her sick child.

"How is it with him, Annetje?"

"'T is bad enough with him," said the woman sullenly.

"Tut! tut! take heart, woman, there's a chance yet!"

"There's no chance! He'll be taken from me — he's going now!" returned the mother with choking voice.

"He has the fever?" asked the visitor, bending over the bed and clasping the burning little palm in his own.

"He has death on him — and 't is ye did it!" cried the woman, with a flash of indignation. "Ye sent away his father, and I had nobody to help me. Ye sent away my Joost; he will never come back, — the husband, and now the child. I have nothing left!"

"Sh — sh! Where is your sense, woman? Joost will soon be home, and the babe here well, and all happy."

"Well, say ye? Look at that!" sobbed the poor mother, pointing to the bed and covering her face.

Leisler turned, and saw the child writhing in convulsions.

When the paroxysm was over, he lifted the tiny sufferer in his arms, and walked up and down in the little chamber, where the light of the single dip-candle threw his shadow in grotesque proportions on the wall.

"When had ye the doctor?" he asked, as the child grew quieter.

"Oh, the doctor — the doctor! I'll have no more of 'm! What good is he? He shakes his head, and does nothing!"

"Poor Annetje!"

"'T is ye have done it!" cried the woman, irritated by this unavailing sympathy. "But for ye I had now both husband and child!"

"I did but my duty, woman," said the captain hum-

bly. "Had it been my own to suffer, I must have done the same."

"Husband and child — husband and child — both gone — lost and gone — never to come back!" repeated the woman in despairing tones, as she rocked back and forth in her chair.

"Pray ye to the Lord, good Annetje. Go to him with your sorrow, and he will send ye comfort," said the captain, devoutly. "But give not up all hope yet. I will go myself and fetch the doctor."

"Fetch him no more! I'll have him no more! He was here at sundown. He does nothing but shake his head and say, 'Ye must lose yer babe, — 't is the Lord's will.' Fetch him no more. I'll not believe him."

"I'll go, then, and call the neighbors to help ye."

"That shall ye not. I sent them home. I'll have him to myself. Little Joost! Sweet one! The best of the brood, and named for his father, too. 'T was but last Monday, a week ago, he was running all about, and laughing till ye might hear him in the street. Oh-h-h! 'T is well his father is gone! Well — well — well for me! What could I say to him, coming back? Gone — gone! Big Joost and little Joost — man and child both angels in glory. 'T is ye have done it! And ye shall answer for it, too, if a widow's prayers be heard!"

To and fro, to and fro, in the little room, the rough soldier walked with the dying child. Worn out by grief and care, the hapless mother slept from sheer exhaustion; waking by fits and starts to renew her laments and reproaches, ringing with wearying monotony the changes upon the few phrases afforded by her scant vocabulary.

Returning no answer, save now and then a brief word of consolation, the conscience-stricken watcher kept his march.

Quicker and sharper grew the attacks of the little sufferer, as its life ebbed with the waning night. The candle burnt out and guttered in its socket, leaving the room in darkness. The storm filled the night with tumult, the waves lashed the neighboring rocks with thunderous roar, while high up above the little roof, on the Verlettenberg, the old windmill creaked and groaned in the furious blast.

In the gray of the morning all was over; the flickering life-light had gone out at last. With softened look, Leisler laid the tiny, wasted form on the bed, beside its sleeping mother; then, with uplifted reverent face, muttering over the unconscious pair a hurried prayer, he went away to rouse the neighbors.

Wading home in the early dawn through the slumping, half-melted snow, the chastened commander was met at the turning of the dock by one of his slaves, guiding a breathless messenger with a packet. It contained but a few lines from his correspondent in Boston:—

“News is come that Nicholson is made lieutenant-governor of Virginia, and that Colonel Henry Sloughter is appointed governor of New York.”

To the amazement of the gaping messenger, the grave, sad-looking, middle-aged man to whom he had handed the letter tore it into strips, stamped it under foot, and filled the cool, still morning air with hot-mouthed curses.



"In the gray of the morning all was over."

XVIII.

BARENT RHYNDERS was the son of a well-to-do blacksmith of Albany. Sent to New York on some business by his father, he caught the martial fever, and offered his services at the fort.

Leisler, only too glad to get such a strapping recruit, speedily discovered in him metal of worth. That lumbering body, as it turned out, was topped by a good head. A matter of moment accidentally entrusted to him was managed with a judgment surprising in a tyro. Other commissions followed, with the same result; everything given him to do was done with quietness and despatch. At last, for want of a more experienced envoy, he was sent up to his native town on some delicate mission, in which he showed such steadiness and good sense that on his return he found himself in high favor.

Going back and forth on frequent errands from the fort to the house in the Strand, he of necessity fell in with Jacob junior, and as the two were nearly of an age they soon became boon companions. Thus, although not a member of the household, he was a constant visitor. The commander always gave him a grunt of welcome, Vrouw Leisler took a motherly interest in his health, and the younger fry made him one in all their plans and pastimes.

Hester was too much preoccupied, these days, to take careful note of the new-comer. His silence, his stolidity, his homeliness of mind and person, were

qualities not of a sort to draw attention. It was not very clear how the junker produced his social effects, for he had little to say, and seemed always furnishing a background of neutrality to the more loquacious and forth-putting. Yet plainly enough he had a value for his associates, a very positive value, which, while as inscrutable in its working as the dark rays of the sun, was as marked in its effect. It may have been, after all, only a sound-metal ring of genuineness in him ; for in time one found out that he spoke only when he had something to say, he laughed only when he was pleased, he told the truth so far as practicable, and for the rest kept his own counsel as to things not needful to be mentioned.

So far as Hester was concerned, it was not at all in the stranger's favor that he was Cobus's bosom friend, for she rebelled at her brother's lordly and patronizing ways since he had been employed in the public business. Thus, vexed by Cobus's contemptuous air and weary of her mother's eternal housekeeping prattle, Hester came little by little to find a solace in the ungainly junker's society. Whether it was that he did not dispute with her, that he was always attentive, that he seemed to carry about an atmosphere of kindness and sympathy, it is impossible now to say. Each and all of these considerations doubtless served as determining influences in making her gradually turn to him for her only real companionship.

It will presently more clearly appear how unconscious she was of this tendency in herself. In passing, it may be instanced as significant that she seemed often to forget him in her preoccupation, and to go on as if thinking aloud, and with as little restraint in feeling or action as if in presence of a chair or bureau.

“In this self-absorption, naturally enough it had never occurred to her to consider what his feelings might be in the matter, or whether he had any. Quite blind to the look of pleasure which twinkled in his small eyes and overspread his broad face at her approach, she was equally insensible of his many little devices for ministering to her comfort, accomplished as they were for the most part by stealth. So, too, when Cobus burst in upon their communings and rudely dragged Barent off on some junker sport or quest, she failed, in her own vexation, to remark her companion’s chagrin.

From this happy unconsciousness she was roughly awakened. Catalina came one morning to visit her. Such an event was of rare occurrence now-a-days for divers reasons, none of which were very clear to Hester. In the first place, Catalina had been slow in recovering from her resentment at her friend’s engagement; again, no sooner was the obnoxious sweetheart gone, and that stumbling-block removed, than the begum began mysteriously to bristle with so many objections to any social intercourse with the Strand that the old intimacy was well-nigh broken up.

Whether reconciled at last to a divided affection, or whether hoping that in this long separation Hester’s heart would become estranged from the absent junker, Catalina had latterly shown an inclination to take her friend back into favor; and this morning, on coming together, they flew into each other’s arms with old-time fervor.

What a day of delight it proved to the joyous maiden! How lover-like she followed Hester about in her household tasks, from the cold, stone-flagged pantry, where she chopped, seasoned, and pressed the

savory hoof-kaas, to the big lumber-strewn garret where, seated near a southern window at the old-fashioned hand-loom brought from Holland by Vrouw Leisler's grandam, Hester skilfully sped back and forth the flying shuttle, weaving her mother's good homespun thread into a coarse blue linsey-woolsey stuff against the time new petticoats should be needed.

At dinner there was the strange junker brought home by Cobus. Having neither seen nor heard of him, Catalina at first bestowed scant notice upon him. By and by, as it chanced, he spoke to Hester. It was a quite commonplace speech, not at all worth repeating, but none the less the watchful visitor's eye instantly sought out the speaker; none the less she studied him narrowly for the rest of the meal, noting how steadily his eyes were fixed in one direction, how intently his ears listened for the sound of one voice.

Neither did she fail to remark, as they rose from the table, that he speedily drew Hester aside, nor with what a true wizard touch he held fast to his victim by bringing forth things from his pocket, — a pair of Hester's scissors which he had taken down on the sly to be sharpened by the armorer at the fort, and a curious little talisman he had bought of a sailor in the dock.

The things were trifles; they did not count. It was the looks and manners of the two, the comfortable air of intimacy between them, which fixed the watcher's attention. And herein, as it seemed, she found some alarming significance, as well as in the further fact that their parting at the door was prolonged until interrupted by the peremptory whistle of Cobus, who stood waiting in the street for his friend.

Turning back into the house, Hester found her friend putting on her hood with an air of precipitation.

"Going?"

"'T is time, I think."

"What, now?" wonderingly

"You have no need of me."

"So?"

"I leave you to your junkers."

The listener gazed with innocent, wide-opened eyes.

"You comfort yourself while the old one is gone. What becomes of the new when the old comes back? You think, mayhap, he will never come. So! you waste no time; you cannot wait, you fill his place at once," with an ironical laugh. "How seems it, then, to have two at a time? Poor number one, if he could see who fills his place! Poor junker, he had at least a fair face; he did not look like a devil-fish."

A look of growing intelligence succeeded the wonder in the listener's eyes. Her cheeks were burning red; she stood like one in a stupor, while her jealous little guest, with a scornful courtesy, marched quickly to the door, sending back as a parting shaft, —

"I wish you joy of your junkers, — a fresh one every month. You have no need of friends, not you!"

Hester made no move to stop her angry friend. She was for the moment too much stunned. Like a somnambulist waking in a place wild and strange, she had a feeling of unsettled equilibrium. Was this the truth she had heard? If not, why had it such an appearance of truth? With swift retrospect she went over the few months covering her acquaintance with Barent. A new wave of color surged slowly over her face. She walked to the window, and looked out; she turned, and went mechanically up to her own

room, threw herself down in a chair, and passed her hand vaguely over her forehead.

After a while, by a fresh effort of will, she forced herself slowly and carefully to review the whole matter again. Her face gradually cleared.

It was nothing, after all. She had talked with this big, kindly hearted junker, to be sure, because — because he was there, because she had nothing else to do. She had never thought of him a moment after he was out of sight. Besides, he was Cobus's friend; he came to see Cobus; he cared nothing for her. Catalina was absurd, as usual; she was always imagining things.

By such sound reflections she gradually won back her self-composure. With absolute innocence of intent there could be no deep sense of wrong-doing. Nevertheless, as appeared, she felt far from easy about the matter, and awaited with evident anxiety her next meeting with Barent. When he came she studied him curiously, critically, from a new and different standpoint. Now for the first time and clearly enough she saw his face kindle at her approach, she noted his little kindnesses. It had an odd effect upon her. She flamed up with indignation, as though he had taken an unwarrantable liberty, and replied sharply to his friendly overtures.

Barent naturally looked greatly discomfited, and cast an inquiring glance at the capricious maiden out of the corner of his eye. But he was blessed with a temperament to deal with caprices. As a strong man treats the foibles of a child, he let them pass, and waited for the return of reason, — a method equally admirable whether due to thickness of skin or largeness of mind.

But here was no case of caprice, as the junker was soon to learn to his cost. This young woman, who for months had been so kind, so hospitable, so companionable, and even confidential, now suddenly turned about, and began to treat him in a most distant manner, to avoid meeting him or holding with him any but the most formal communication. All this without explanation or apparent cause.

As suddenly on his side the junker began to realize how prized this companionship had been by him, what an important part it had formed of his daily life, how insensibly it had colored all his plans for the future, and what a grievous affliction its abrupt cessation now proved.

Conscious of no offence committed, of no shortcoming in manner or intent, nor of any neglect of duty towards his young hostess, he was at first puzzled, and then greatly disturbed, by this singular change of deportment. After a long and fruitless pondering upon the matter, he resolved to seek an explanation of Hester herself. This, however, he found no easy matter, so persistently did she avoid him, and so lacking was he in the boldness needed to make opportunities.

But patience such as Barent's rarely goes unrewarded. One Sunday afternoon, while idly pacing the ramparts of the fort, he saw the familiar figure just turning into the old burying-ground which formerly stretched between the western side of Broadway and the North River. Here at last was his chance. He paused a moment to summon resolution, and then made the best of his way to the spot.

Passing through the gate, he looked about for several minutes before discovering the object of his

search. After no long time, however, he saw her half-way down to the river, wandering among the graves and studying the epitaphs.

He stopped; his courage flew away now when he most needed it. He loitered, watching her movements, accommodating his pace to hers. Muttering to himself in a distraught way, he read aloud scraps of the inscriptions on the simple head-stones, as he sauntered on.

“*‘Hier rust het lichaem von Peter Suydam’* — now she stops — *‘geboren den 20^{ste} February’* — she does not hear me — *‘overleden’* — she goes on again. *‘In den Heere ontslapen’* — in a minute more I shall come up with her — *‘Hendrick Amermore’* — how will she look! *‘Tot gedachtenis von Jacob Mindert overleden’* — she will be angered — *‘oude zynde 75 jaaren’* — yet will I not go without speech with her. *‘Hier leydt het stoffelyck deel von Wouter VanDyke.’*”

Hester, too, it seemed, was busy with mortuary lore; for, turning back by chance to read again an epitaph she had passed, she came full upon her abashed follower. With a dismayed look, he stammered, —

“I saw you from the fort. I — I came here to get speech with you!”

“With me?” she began, with a flushed and guilty look, but directly rallied, and ended in a freezing tone, “What can you have of such moment to say to me?”

“I — we — of late you have not treated me with the old good-will.”

“So?”

He did not wince at the exasperating monosyllable, but went on simply, —

“I beg to be told in what I have given you offence.”

Staggered a little by this directness, Hester labored over her answer.

"I — you cannot — my good-will is not a matter that comes at bidding," she answered at last, evasively.

"I see well — I know all. I am a big bungler. I have done something; I have made a mistake; I have hurt your feelings. 'Tis always so; I drive them away I would draw to me. What shall I do? I think only of pleasing you, and here see how it turns out. Tell me now what it is, that I may do it no more."

The petitioner was plainly stirred up. This was a long speech for him, and it was blurted out in a spasmodic, half-surly tone, as though in resentment at Providence for having made him after so faulty a pattern.

Hester looked at him attentively, as she said in a tone somewhat softer, —

"You have done nothing; there is nothing to tell."

"But why, then, do you speak after that fashion? Why do you look at me in such a way? 'T would scare an enemy, that look! Why do you not give me your hand when we meet? Why do we not sit and talk as we did? Why do you never come upon the stoop now-a-days? Why do you not ask me to do things? Tell me that, — tell me that, if there is nothing!"

This downright way of conducting the interview was very confusing. Hester blushed, quite at a loss for an answer. Recovering herself presently, she replied, —

"I do not choose to talk upon the matter."

"You will be friends no longer?" cried the junker, with a great burst.

Hester hesitated ; for a moment a look of irresolution disturbed her face ; then stepping forward with outstretched hand, she said, —

“I thank you for all your good offices. You have my good-will, but,” she concluded, firmly, “we can never be friends in the way you would wish.”

And turning about she walked away, leaving him staring at the grave-stones, and muttering vaguely, —

“*Hier leydt het lighaem . . . ‘never be friends’ . . . von Hester, huysvrouw von Barent Rhynders . . . ‘never be friends in the way you would wish’ . . . overleden den . . . ‘never — never in the way you would wish!’*”

XIX.

ONE morning, before he was dressed, Leisler was told that a lady in much distress waited below to speak with him. This every-day incident failed to awaken any interest in the commander, who finished his toilet with deliberation.

On his way downstairs, as it chanced, he met a slave going up with a dish of fresh olykoecken. A circumstance so very unusual directly excited his curiosity, and he stopped to question the woman, who explained that it was a gift to Hester from Vrouw Van Dorn, just left at the door by Rip with his basket of garden stuff.

Content with this plausible explanation, the fasting official, without thinking of his action, helped himself to one of the cakes from the heaped-up dish, and munched it as he went his way.

Hester greeted her gift with a look of joy, — with the look of a gourmand at sight of his favorite tid-bit. In her eagerness she even proceeded to count the cakes. Suddenly her face fell. She counted them again; she overturned the dish upon the table, and carefully replaced them one by one. The tale was always the same. Her face settled into deeper disappointment.

“Ye-es — ’t is very kind in Vrouw Van Dorn to remember me — I like olykoecken so much — and these seem very good. Go take them to the kitchen.”

The puzzled slave withdrew, leaving her distraught young mistress to finish dressing. Called presently to breakfast, Hester went moodily downstairs, where she found her father still occupied with his visitor. She caught a glimpse of the petitioner's face as she passed through the hall, — a pale woman, with a look of faded beauty and an air of suffering. Her father was talking in a voice even louder and rougher than usual. She heard the tag-end of the conversation; she had no choice. It was for anybody's benefit within stone's throw of the house.

"So! he has found out, then, who is master here, — and so will the rest of his damned crew, every traitor of them. They will hatch Papist plots, they will stir up the French and Indians, will they?"

"Whatever my husband did, he thought it his duty —"

"Bah-h-h-h!"

"If he has done wrong, he has paid a bitter penalty. He has been punished enough; he is sick, he is suffering. 'T is cruel to keep him in that dreadful prison!"

"So! he finds it not a bower, then? I'm glad of that."

"'T is a deadly place; the damp stands in drops on the wall; 't is not fit for a beast, much less a Christian. His health fails, he is wasting away, — he cannot live there."

"Huh! better men have lived all their lives in a dungeon."

"He will pledge himself to meddle in public affairs no more."

"He is late with his pledges," with a scoffing laugh. "I take care myself now of all that."

A gleam of spirit leaped up for a moment in the woman's eyes, and it was with great difficulty she kept her voice pitched to the petitioner's key.

"If you could but see him now," she began, after making sure of the conquest over herself; "he has not strength left to do you any harm. If you will but let him come back to his family —"

"No, I say; you have my answer. Get you gone! Let the dog humble himself! Let him do his own begging!"

Bolting his breakfast after the agitation of this scene, the commander went away to the fort without another thought of the olykoecken.

Near the dock, as it chanced, two ox-carts, passing, obstructed the narrow street and brought him to a stand-still. As he stood waiting, a man and a woman, turning into the street from the direction of the Heeren-Gracht, came full upon him. Whirling about with a suppressed exclamation, the woman gazed fixedly at the bay. The man stopped to speak.

"Well, Staats?"

"I have been to see the prisoners, as you desired, and 't is fit I should call your attention to their condition."

Leisler scowled.

"Bayard is in a bad state. If he be not presently brought forth from that place and well cared for, I will not answer for his life."

"Let him die and rot, and go to hell, then! Look to your own affairs, and keep your hands from meddling in matters of state."

Roaring out this answer as he brushed past them, the commander held his way to the fort.

There was an interval of silence; then the begum,

slowly turning, laid her claw-like hand on her husband's arm. He looked down at her sullenly. Raising herself upon her toes, she peered into his face.

"This is the great, good man God sends to save the people!"

Regardless of the effect of his words, Leisler strove, by a fierce application to other matters, to forget the unwelcome subject which had been forced upon his attention twice in the course of the morning.

Arrived at the fort, notwithstanding the early hour, an expectant crowd was already waiting to get speech with him. Silent and scowling, he stalked through the midst of them, roughly thrusting off one or two who were bold enough to pluck him by the sleeve, in the hope thereby of getting an earlier hearing.

The large, low-studded room which he had made his headquarters was a scene of confusion; arms, ammunition, provisions, harnesses, broken furniture, parts of uniforms, were scattered about on benches or on the floor, while a large table near the windows was piled high with papers in hopeless disorder.

At this table he took his seat, and one by one the petitioners filed in.

A stout farmer from Hempstead, sent up by his neighbors, came to warn the commander that if he persisted in enforcing the last tax levy there would be an uprising; that the people had borne all they could bear; and that certain out-spoken folks boldly said his assembly, called together from here, there, and everywhere, had no right to lay taxes on folks not represented in it.

The man stopped to take breath and observe the effect of his words. Despite his hulking form, his heavy, sunburnt features framed in long, matted locks

of tow-colored hair, his coarse homespun, which added to the general clumsiness of his appearance, there was an earnestness in his manner, a significant look of resolution about his coarse mouth, which should have inspired respect.

Leisler, however, gazing sternly at the wall before him, said only, —

“Is that all?”

“Is it not enough?”

“Bring in the next,” to the sentinel.

As the discomfited farmer withdrew, two deacons from the Vlacktebos church came to beg for the release of their pastor, Dominie Varick, who had been shut up in prison for too plain speaking in the pulpit. The big furrows between the listener's eyebrows deepened, as the worthy pair went on to urge that worse talk than the dominie's could be heard on every corner; that folks could not be hindered from speaking their minds; that on account of this and other like acts of severity people were getting daily more outspoken, and it would be well for them in power to take warning.

“The next!” bawled the commander for answer.

A tradesman in the dock came to complain that some of the soldiers from the fort helped themselves to his wine and brandy, and when they could drink no more destroyed and made waste of it.

“And what better use could it be put to? Get along with ye!”

“Captain Ludowyck!”

Notwithstanding the scowl with which he was greeted, the new-comer walked boldly forward and delivered himself of his errand in a firm voice.

“I come here to ask ye no favor, Jacob Leisler.

I come to tell ye the truth whether ye like it or no. The whole town is stirred up over this story of Bayard; 't is said he is in a bad state and growing worse. 'T is said ye know it well, and will not let him forth. Heed me or not, as ye choose; but I warn ye, if harm comes to him 't is not these walls nor yonder handful of men will save ye from the wrath of the people."

Clutching the heavy table before him with his big hairy hands, the listener had much ado to control the paroxysm of rage which convulsed his whole person, as his former fellow-captain of the train-bands turned on his heel and walked calmly away. Doubtless he was amazed that there still lived in the community a man bold enough to make such a speech to his face.

"Dr. Gerardus Beekman!" called the sentinel, opening the door again.

At sight of his next visitor, a tall, spare, dignified figure in clerical dress, the commander's face somewhat relaxed.

"What now, doctor?" he asked, extending his hand.

"Heigho! little that's cheering, I grieve to say."

"So?"

"We are losing ground, I fear; there is much discontent —"

"Bah-h!"

"Worse than that, there is daily defection —"

Leisler gave a scornful nod.

"The people are ready to believe anything, and where there are eager ears, as you know, there is never dearth of wherewithal to fill them."

"What is said? Out with it!"

"The worst is that you are sending every week

shiploads of things to the Indies to be sold, — household stuff you have stripped from these aristocrats, — and — ”

“Lies! lies, — damned, infernal lies!” cried Leisler, hoarsely, while his thick skin flushed crimson.

“— and that you line your own purse with the proceeds,” continued the doctor, calmly. “’T is said and believed you have a rabid thirst for money, and that you are prepared to go any length to get it.”

“Can I fight the Indians, can I build fortifications, can I carry on the government, without money?” asked the commander, hotly.

“No, but it must be raised by lawful methods. The pocket is the sore place. Let it be once believed that you will empty it without scruple, and your power is gone.”

The listener moved uneasily in his seat, and swallowed an execration that rose to his lips. He knew this man was his friend, that he came with a friendly purpose to tell him the truth, — the truth at once so interesting and exasperating to hear.

“Go on! Go on! What other lies, what worse slanders, are ye keeping back?”

“There is great indignation that you meddle with the preachers.”

“And think ye I’ll have ’em preaching treason in the pulpit? No!” striking the table with his clinched fist. “I’ll nail up every church door and thrust every parson into a dungeon first!”

“Have a care,” said the doctor, shaking his head. “I speak for your good, as you well know. You are lost if you go on after this fashion. The whole island is stirred up over Dominie Varick’s case, and this morning comes news from Albany that Dominie

Dellius has been hunted out of town by Milborne for a slip of the tongue in his morning prayer, and this upon your order and procurement."

The angry outburst which awaited the conclusion of this protest was cut short by an altercation at the door. The sentinel was denying entrance to somebody, who, rudely shoving that official aside, strode boldly into the room.

"Joost!" The speaker's face beamed with unmistakable delight, as he stepped forward, with both hands outstretched, to meet the sun-browned ensign just arrived from his long sea-voyage.

Dr. Beekman turned to go; his leave-taking was unheeded. The two were left alone.

"Well?" cried the commander, compressing into one short, sharp word all his unbounded curiosity and interest.

Honest Joost drew up a chair, and entered upon his story at once. He did not mince matters; he blurted out the bald, ugly truth. His journey had been in vain. He had been snubbed at court; he had been kicked, and cuffed, and knocked about, thrust into corners, neglected, contemned, ignored.

"But the king — his Majesty — ye saw him?"

"That did I, and often!"

"Ye spoke of me — ye told him how I saved the city — the province — from the Papists?"

"All — everything — I tried to tell it."

"What said he to that?"

"Said! He heard nothing. He looked at me sideways — thus!" imitating with his fat neck and clown's head the royal manner — "with just one look downward from my poll to my shoe-buckles — like this, see!" — another illustration — "and then ye would

think I was there no more, for he turns to talk to some popinjay of a fine lord."

"And ye were put down by a look? Why called ye not out, 'I come from your Majesty's humble servant Jacob Leisler, to set forth how he suppressed a damnable plot of the Papists to seize upon your rich province of New York'?"

"All that I said,—all that and more; but when I would go on, his Majesty turns him about, and waving his hand,—as it might be in this way,—'Go,' says he, 'tell your story to the lord secretary!'"

Leisler started to his feet, nearly overturning the chair in his violence.

"Why did I ever send such an ass on this business? I know ye well; ye went in to his Majesty in a greasy doublet, I'll be bound, with dung on your shoes and your locks in a snarl."

"That did I not! There was never a man in the chamber finer than I,—nor so fine; a grand new velvet doublet, which took every stuyver in my purse to pay for, with yellow hose, knots of green ribbon at my garters, new pinchbeck buckles in my shoes, my hair reeking with bear's fat and a goodly sprinkling of civet. Ye'd have sworn I was born to it, to see me ducking and kneeling down with my hat under my arm, like the best of 'em! I watched them close, never fear, to get the trick of it."

"But the lord secretary,—what said *he*?"

"Nothing but a 'Humph' and a 'Ha' and 'I'll think upon it,' and never looked fairly at me all the time I was there, but got upon his legs in the midst of my story, yawned in my face, as he would swallow me, and went mincing and ambling out of the closet."

"Fool! And ye were content with this! Ye took this for answer, and went no more!" broke in the listener fiercely, as if resolved to find his henchman at fault.

"That did I not. I went every day, once, twice, and again, to his Majesty, to his Lordship, to the Plantation Committee, to everybody who had voice or vote in the matter, and I soon smelt out the rat."

"Ei?"

"The reason of all the neglect and the insults."

"What?"

"I found it all out."

"Will ye speak, fool?"

"That damned Nicholson!"

Leisler snorted with rage.

"I find him everywhere; creeping, — creeping like a snake out of the king's closet, creeping into the lord's waiting-room, whispering, — whispering till he has turned all to poison."

"'T is true, then, that tale?"

"He is sent to Virginia."

"And New York?"

"One Sloughter is appointed."

Again the commander clutched the table, while his breath, sucked in between his clinched teeth, sounded like escaping steam.

"And that is not the worst," continued the inexorable Joost.

"Ei?"

"Those dogs yonder are made councillors to the new governor."

"Who?"

"Philipse, Vàn Cortlandt, and —"

"And —"

"This one below," pointing downward.

"God Almighty!"

Seizing a heavy glass containing the lees of a stale dram, which stood near him upon the table, the incensed official dashed it into a thousand pieces on the floor.

"And not a word of Jacob Leisler."

"Ei?"

"Your name not mentioned in it all."

"Go! Go! Get along! Leave me alone, will ye?" roared the agonized man, as he raged about the room like a wild beast.

Shocked and overawed at sight of the wrestlings of that strong spirit, the faithful ensign withdrew at last and left him alone.

Overwhelmed with a flood of curses at his attempt to usher in the next suitor in waiting, the wondering sentinel held the door against all comers, and the commander had it out with himself.

An hour passed. The sentinel ventured at length to open the door and take in a paper. There, white and haggard, sat his master glaring at the table, upon which lay a significant result of his meditation in the shape of a freshly written letter to Milborne, summoning him home from Albany. Leisler took the paper, opened it, and perfunctorily read the first few lines. His look of indifference quickly gave way in turn to one of surprise, to one of eagerness, to one of triumph, and finally, as he studied the signature at the bottom of the page, to a passing contortion of the muscles which fulfilled the functions of a smile.

That extraordinary signature the commander glared at so eagerly still merits study after the lapse of two

centuries. It has become historic. With its elaborate flourish it looks like nothing so much as a skein of black silk hopelessly snarled, yet among the tangled lines stands out boldly enough the name *Nicholas Bayard*.

It was pathetic, that signature, in its feeble execution of a dashing intent; for it was the only bold touch in the paper. All the rest was meek enough. Grievous indeed must have been the case of the writer when he brought himself to address Leisler as "lieutenant-governor," when he promised respect and deference for the future, and humbly begged for pardon and release.

Straightway all the vexations of the morning are forgotten. The commander lifts again his head, the fire returns to his eye, and as the bell in the steeple close at hand rings forth the noontide hour he sets out, with a deep-heaved sigh, for his dinner in the Strand.

He walks along deeply absorbed in thought; he takes no heed of what goes on about him. Neighbors and townsmen pass and repass, like the figures in a dream. He sees them through a mist; their voices come like a distant murmur; he is blind to their angry glances shot at him askance, deaf to their mutterings, not always low, as he passes.

High above their heads, grappling with great odds, he strides along. Something happens, — a common street incident. A hulking fellow is rolling a cask into a shop. His passage barred by this necessary business, the dreamer stops patiently. Through his abstraction the thought gradually penetrates to his mind that the fellow is purposely and impudently blocking his way; directly he flames forth: —

"Get along with ye, idle dog! D' ye think to hold me here all day?"

The man, as if waiting for this remonstrance as a cue, makes a loud and saucy answer. Straightway a crowd of his fellows begin to gather from the neighboring shop-doors. The commander, nothing daunted, raises his halberd, whereupon, like the sudden bursting of a thunder-cloud, the whole pack set upon him.

"Dog-driver!"

"Down with him!"

"General Hog!"

"Butcher!"

"Tread him in the mire!"

"We have him now!"

"Give him no quarter!"

"Deacon Jailer!"

"Blockhead!"

"Little Cromwell!"

Pressing upon him, thrusting him into the mud, knocking off his hat, pelting him with offal, they were every moment advancing to greater indignities, when in a trice he turned upon them. Without a word of parley or threat, without deigning to draw his sword, he fell upon them as upon a pack of dogs, with buffets and kicks, routing them utterly. Then pausing only to catch his breath and cast about him one wide-flashing look of triumph, he went his way.

Doubtless he little realized what a potent ally in the fray was the terror of his name. One man does not rout a multitude by the strength of his arms alone. But though he had come forth a victor, he had also learned a lesson. He took it to heart, and next morning a guard was appointed to wait upon the commander-in-chief wherever he went.

It is a proof otherwise how little weight the matter had with him that he made no mention of it at home.

"Where is Rhynders?" he asked of Cobus, on reaching the house. "Go find him, and bid him make ready to go at once to Albany on a pressing matter!"

"Barent? He is gone!"

"Where? And who gave him leave?"

"Oh, little he cared for anybody's leave; he was ready to jump into the dock but for me."

"What ailed the lad?"

"He bade me not tell."

"Out with it, I say!"

"'T is Hester, then," went on Cobus, only too glad to unbosom himself.

"What had Hester to do with him?"

"He wanted to court her, and she turned him a cold shoulder, and when he pressed the matter let him know that never would she have anything to say to him."

"Will she not? So! What, she sends packing a lad like that, and just at the minute I have need of him? Go call the hussy to me!"

Quite unsuspectingly Hester came at her father's bidding.

"Ei, ei! A fine trick ye have played with your airs and graces! Ye send away Barent — *now* — now when I want him? Ye with your damned nonsense will have nothing to say to him, ei?"

Mary's wedding was not forgotten. Hester turned ghastly white.

"Ye will have nothing to say to the best junker in the province, — one that can keep his mouth shut,



"An' ye kill me for it I will never marry him!"

that has an old head on his shoulders ? Ye will have nothing to say to him ?”

“I — did he — who has said this ?” stammered the dismayed culprit.

“Ask me no questions ! No matter who said it. ’Tis the truth. I know ye. Ye think still of that sneaking cur of a Papist. Listen to me ! Mark ye, I say ; I will have no child’s play. I send this very day for that junker to come back. I bring ye face to face with him, and let me hear ye say *no* to him then !”

Even the lips of the poor girl blanched, and her eyes had the look of one in a swoon. But though sorely tried, her nerves bore the strain. Leaning against the wall to steady herself, she directed a look at her father and tried to speak. Once — twice — thrice, but her voice stuck in her throat. In desperation she shook her head.

“Ye will not !” he ejaculated, in hoarse amazement.

Uttered with shaking limbs, but with a look as resolute as his own, at last the faltering answer came : “An’ ye kill me for it, I will never marry him !”

XX.

THIS scene with her father proved to Hester a veritable moral crisis ; that is to say, a dividing point between all that had gone before and all that was to come. Like an electric storm, it had cleared the air. She could now look about her to better purpose, and, whatever else might come of it, her own position, at least, was sharply defined.

Despite her courage at the moment, however, directly it was all over she was seized with a feeling of panic. She well knew her father's strength, she had little confidence in her own, and then there was the experience of Mary.

Pacing back and forth in her fireless little chamber all the next morning, careless of the biting cold, she scratched peep-holes in the thick hoar-frost covering the window-panes to catch glimpses of the outer world, as if in hopes thereby to find suggestion or relief.

At last the constraint of the four walls became intolerable. She must get out under the sky, away from the oppressing sense of human nearness. Putting on her quilted hood and long cloak, she left the house, turning, as it seemed, at random, but in reality in obedience to the sub-conscious tension of a guiding rein which directed her thought always to one spot, her mount of promise, her outlook of hope and expectation.

Slipping and floundering up and down over the snow hummocks, worn to stony hardness by foot-passengers and ox-carts, which covered all the city streets, she made her way, in the teeth of a whistling wind, around to the bridge, and climbed the icy slope of the Verlettenberg.

There, with eyes turned wistfully northward, she studied long and anxiously every detail of the landscape. It lay in winter desolation, cold and still. Above the jumble of chimneys, gables, and snow-covered roofs in the near fore-ground there bristled the jagged line of the palisades. Beyond, as the island widened towards the mainland, the ground rose into high, wooded hills, the leafless forests being relieved here and there by rich masses of evergreens, while the interlying valleys were marked by white stretches where the thick, untrodden snow covered the frozen bouweries.

Again and again Hester intently scanned this whole region from river to river. A hawk soaring high in air, the pines and hemlocks of the distant forest billowing like ocean waves in the wind, the shadows of the clouds sweeping over the hills, the smoke curling up from a far-off farm-house, — these were the only signs of life and movement in the wide and varied scene.

What did Tryntje mean?

The bleak wind, the hard, bright sun, the white-gray sky, the outer solitude, — were these the comforting influences she sought? Plainly Nature had no message for her. Thereupon, by a swift revulsion neither strange nor rare, she straightway yearned for the closer touch of her human kind. She bethought her of Catalina. Indeed, Catalina was intimately con-

nected with this crisis. It was she who, however unconsciously, had brought it all about; who, whether by instinct or insight, had instantly detected the truth. Moreover, notwithstanding her caprices and fits of passion, Catalina's loyalty was as steadfast as the sunshine. To Catalina she would go.

Down at the bottom of her father's garden, where a miniature pond formed by the melting snow had frozen over, Catalina was found skating with her sisters. Hester stopped a moment to look on. The busy skater was revelling in her sport. With her fair hair blowing about, her eyes glowing, her cheeks well-nigh as bright as her scarlet hood, she was at the moment a sight to gaze upon. Despite the grotesque clumsiness of her dress, with its multitudinous petticoats and quiltings, despite the thick, shapeless shoes and clumsy Dutch skates which encumbered her feet, her figure asserted itself through all its uncouth wrappings in lines of grace and beauty.

Uttering a cry of joy at sight of Hester, she came plunging and staggering up through the drifts to welcome her. Filled with the abounding life, with the sense of power, with the madcap, rollicking spirits, produced by vigorous exercise in the clear, cold air, she seized upon her friend with affectionate violence, hugged and kissed her, whirled her about, and dragged her breathless and protesting to the pond, where she fitted her, would she or no, to a pair of skates.

Although pleased with so cordial a reception, Hester was by no means in accord with this romping mood. It jarred upon her nerves; it seemed, too, very silly and childish after her own late experiences. None of this internal discord, however, appeared upon her placid face, as she glided mechanically about after

Catalina, who, like a young bacchante, whirled and swayed and circled around her with gay tauntings, with teasing gestures, with mocking, mischievous eyes, and all with the wild freedom of a swallow in its flight.

Now and then, as if to goad her dumpish visitor to some retaliation, the merry hoiden came down upon her with a tremendous bump, which brought them both, amid shouts of laughter, in a swirl of petticoats, to the icy floor.

Sitting still a moment to catch her breath after one of these downfalls, Catalina noted her friend's preoccupation.

"Something is the matter?"

The visitor looked in doubt whether to confess or deny.

"Come, now, you need not shake your head. Out with it. I must hear. I love secrets, as you know. Will you tell?"

Still confidence hung fire.

"You shall not budge from this place till you do. See, I will hold you fast! You cannot stir! Come, I say!" with an imperative little shake. "What is it?"

Seeing the growing seriousness in the pleading face, Hester, who seemed only waiting for a sympathetic mood, at last yielded.

"Do you remember, when you were last at our house, what you said?"

Catalina shook her head, with a puzzled look.

"You were very peevish and rude. You got into a passion and went home before your time, and I thought you a silly little fool, as sometimes—pardon me—you are. Nay, you need not redden, for this time you were in the right."

"So?"

"About the junker," continued Hester, reddening in her turn.

"The new junker? You *are* in love with him?"

"No — yet —"

"You made him think so?"

"Yes, but I was innocent. It came about I know not how. He was always there; he was like the air, the sunshine, comfortable-like, but one took no note of him."

Catalina drew closer, with increasing interest.

"You came; you opened my eyes. I was affrighted and drew back."

"And he?"

"He thought me fickle."

"Yes."

"That I was sporting with him."

"And then?"

"He would take no hints, no warnings, he must needs make me speak, and I had no course but to speak truth."

"What said he then?"

"He must needs be pleading."

"To be sure."

"Whereupon I thought it right and honest to have done with the matter then and there, and so made him understand there could be nothing betwixt us."

"How did he look at that?"

"Woful he looked, poor junker, and wofully he took it all to heart; for he straightway left his work and everything, and stole away home to Albany."

Catalina drew a long breath of tragic interest.

"But mark you now what befalls. Just then my father has need of him upon some public business.

He is not to be found. The truth comes out. Father sends for me in terrible rage. He has heard an idle rumor somewhere that I had to do with it."

"What then?" demanded the listener, almost beside herself with impatience.

"He makes me speak. I tell the truth, whereupon he swears an awful oath that he will send and hale the junker back, and that I shall marry him, yea or nay."

"He is a devil!" cried Catalina, with clinched fists. "My mother says so."

Hester stared, even in the excitement of her confession, at this outspoken opinion of her father.

"But you — you will not do it? What did you then?"

"I was affrighted almost beyond speech, but I mustered strength to say I never would do it."

"He was worse at that?"

"I thought he would kill me upon the spot, for sure I am he suspected the truth."

"Suspected"? But just now you said you had told him."

"Nay, but the cause of my refusal."

"You did not love the junker. That is enough."

"You grow a dullard."

"Ei?"

"Can you think of no other reason?"

An odd, quick movement disturbed the listener's face, a hot flush mingled with the cool glow in her cheeks.

"You see at last, little dunce?"

Without answering, Catalina turned and gazed a long minute, as it seemed, upon the ice-bound harbor.

"Ei?"

"You mean the other junker?" The tone was too elaborate in its indifference.

"Who else?"

"There is hope, then, he may come back?"

"I don't know," faltered Hester, choking with tears at the unexpected question.

"He is in danger?" cried her friend, all indifference gone.

"No-o, I hope not,—perhaps. Tryntje has sent me a message. 'Tis not the one I thought to get. I know not what it means. I only know he is near,—but sh-h!" looking timorously about. "Never breathe a word of this. It might bring harm to him."

"Have no fear." The speaker drew herself up stiffly.

"I must needs have fear. I am filled with fear. I breakfast and sup on nothing else. What will become of him? What will become of me?" She quite broke down, and sobbed aloud.

Catalina was greatly shocked, for Hester was not of the weeping sort. Never before in all their childish troubles had she seen that steadfast face so convulsed. She stood for a moment in doubt. The struggle was short and sharp; the victory not unworthy the pen of the recording angel. Throwing her arms about her weeping friend, she cried:—

"Sh-h, Hester! You shall not—you must not—I will not let you weep. All will come right. You will be happy. I will pray God for you. He will let no harm come to you."

"But—but when that junker is fetched back from Albany, as surely he will be, to take me to wife, what then?"

"I will tell you."

“Eh?”

“Run away —”

“Catalina!”

“— and — go — to — *him*!”

Four breathless little words, and every letter of them heroic. The listener saw nothing of that. She was thinking only that she had received the same advice from another source.

As usual, that night a squad of men kept watch and ward over the city walls. For many months this careful precaution had been taken against any surprise from the mysterious foe, who had never yet shown his head. As, however, night after night set for the dreaded onslaught wore peacefully away, the cry of “Wolf!” began to lose its terrors, and the doughty sentinels, having spent the earlier hours of their watch in smoking, singing, and cracking stupid jokes, passed the later in shamelessly napping at their posts.

By good or ill chance, as it may be judged, Rip Van Dorn had been stationed at the Waterpoort. It will not be forgotten in what comfortable proximity this was to Vrouw Litschoe’s tap-room, and justifiable doubts may arise as to the vigilance of the guard. But strange as it may appear, it was due to this very proximity that when the distant fort bell rang out its midnight peal there was one trusty sentinel awake to count the strokes.

His voice might have been a trifle thick and his step somewhat uncertain, but he was unmistakably awake, else had he never seen and clutched a dark figure which came leaping stealthily over the wall, in his very face, as he staggered back to his post from a visit to Vrouw Annetje.

"Hola there!" muttered the stranger, struggling to his feet. "Let go your hold! Let go, I say!"

"We — th-think about that by and by, my fr-friend."

"Let go! I come here on business."

"Zoo? Ye come — hic — on business? Good! I — I come on b-business too."

"Let go, my good man. 'Tis a most pressing matter I have on hand."

"'T is always p-pressing when one climbs o-over the wall."

"I had no choice but to climb the wall, when I could make nobody hear at the gate."

"Ei?" gasped the startled sergeant.

"I might have pounded till doomsday for all of you, — a set of lazy rascals that sleep at their posts. Wait till the commander hears of it."

"We open not ga-gates to night-haw-awks," hic-coughed the sergeant, defensively.

"You must open to him who gives the countersign, night or day."

"But we wait first, till — hic — till he comes, that man with the count-countersign."

"He is here; I have the countersign!"

"Truly!" with drunken irony. "Out — out with it, then!"

"William of Orange!"

"'T is true, as I live!" muttered the astonished sergeant.

"Come! come, then, let go your hold! I must be on my way."

"Zoo?"

"Beware how you detain me!"

"Who — who does bus-business at this — hic — this hour?"

"Quit your trifling! 'Tis with the commander himself."

Far from being taken aback by this bold announcement, the worthy sentinel answered:—

"Zoo? Then I go with ye."

"Eh?"

"I go—go—hic—with ye: I too have bus-business with the com-commander."

"What? Desert your post? Have a care! What I did others may do," pointing to the wall.

"I—I go with ye to the com-commander," persisted the sergeant, with tipsy concentration.

"Very good, then," coincided the junker, as if seized with a happy thought. "Come along, so you make haste!"

"Oh, we'll make ha—hic—haste enough."

Stumbling and plunging along the snow-blocked Strand, the staggering officer, however unsteady in his gait, kept ever a tight clutch on his prisoner. Presently they came to a low, squat house in which a feeble light was still burning.

"'Tis very cold," said the stranger, with a suggestive shiver.

"Humph—'tis—'tis—hic—that!"

"A glass of brande-wyn might warm the blood."

"That would it, like—hic—nothing else in the world."

"What say you, then, to waking up old Annetje? Think you she could be coaxed to give us a dram?"

"One knows n-nothing till he tries—Mynheer," chuckled the sergeant, turning with his prisoner into the well-known haunt. "Here, Annetje—where are ye? An-netje, I say!"

The wakeful vrouw came promptly forth from her

flock-bed in a neighboring closet, lighted more candles, mended the fire, and made them welcome.

The stranger, meantime, seated himself in the dark corner of the chimney, and kept his broad-brimmed hat pulled forward over his face; and as he spoke as little as possible he was clearly somewhat startled when the sergeant, warmed up by his first dram, hiccupped slyly:—

“ ’Tis the way to — tr-treat an old fr-friend this — ’n’ we — we’re no strangers, ye — ye ’n’ I’re no strangers, Mynheer.”

“ So ? ”

“ No-oo ; we’re old fr-friends, ye ’n’ I ! ”

“ You are mistaken, my good man.”

“ Zoo ? There’s a look — look about ye — one might th-think ’twas Mynheer Van — ”

“ Ahem-hem ! ” coughed the prisoner, suddenly choking over his dram.

“ — Mynheer Van Co-Cort — ” persisted the sergeant.

“ So ? Another dram there, vrouw ! ”

It was only by repeated drams that the inquiring sergeant could be diverted from the question of identification.

At last they rose to go. The stranger beheld with satisfaction the increased unsteadiness of his captor’s gait. None the less, on coming to the highway, he found it no such easy matter to shake loose from him.

“ Come now, my good fellow, ’t is time you were back at your post. Let us part. I thank you for your civility, and wish you good-night.”

“ Not so fa-fast,” hiccupped the other, with drunken cunning. “ I — I go with ye to — hic — the c-c-com-n-nder ! ”

"Not to-night. I am in haste. Next time, my good friend," objected the captive, striving to break loose from the still vigorous clutch.

"I too, I go — to the com-com-mander's with ye!"

Realizing that the moment for action had come, the prisoner, by a sudden and violent effort, wrenched himself free from the sturdy Rip, with one quick blow knocked him into the gutter, and sped away in the darkness.

Rip, however, like many another seasoned toper, clung fast to the main idea. Here was a running of the guard, the escape of a prisoner. Collecting himself, therefore, he took a horn from his belt and blew a blast that sent panic to the heart of the bold fugitive.

Taking by-paths and keeping in the shadow, the latter hurried with might and main through the sleeping town, his heavy boots making a crunching sound upon the frozen streets. Looking back, he heard the murmur of voices, the rush of feet; he knew the alarm had been given.

But his goal was almost reached. An anxious heart awaited him. A loving welcome was assured. His breath came quick and short, his pulse-throbs sounded like rumbling thunder in his ears, he felt cold and hot by turns. What mattered dangers and sufferings endured? Was it not for her? And she — was close at hand!

In such a tumult of thought and feeling he climbed the slippery hill, and stood at last upon the summit of the Verlettenberg. Hester was not there!

XXI.

IN answer to a curt summons, Barent came reluctantly back from Albany in the train of Milborne. He realized, as it seemed, neither the gravity of his offence nor the clemency shown him, for he stared indifferently when told that he might have been shot for a deserter, and listened without apparent shame to the stern reproof of his superior. With the same stolid unconcern he accepted a warm hand-grip from his rugged chief when they met later in private.

At another time he might have fared worse. Just now there were more imperative things on the carpet than matters of petty discipline. Long consultations took place daily between Leisler and his returned lieutenant. They shut themselves up for hours at headquarters, while an impatient crowd thronged the gloomy waiting-room.

Far from being quiet, these closetings were marked by every sign of discord: shouts of anger, sniffs of contempt, stamping, and good round oaths not a few reached the wondering ears of those airing their heels in the passage. None the less, Leisler invariably came forth from these sittings with added courage and confidence.

Naturally enough, Milborne's arguments were specious. He persuaded his listener — it was no difficult task — that his ill-success at the English court was due solely to the character of his envoy; that, al-

though prejudiced, his cause was by no means lost; that his petitions must still be read and would speak for themselves; that Slougher's appointment was only a sop thrown to the other side; that there was no thought of really sending him over. Witness the long months which had intervened since his appointment, and still no news of his setting sail.

The commander took heart at this. He turned back with fresh energy to his work of levying new taxes, strengthening fortifications, and raising recruits, daily increasing the rigor of his rule as he noted signs of contumacy among the people, as he felt them writhe under his heavy hand and detected in their sullen looks hopes of speedy relief from over the water.

Time passed; it presently turned out that Milborne had no divine gift of prophecy. One upon the other's heels came two brief and momentous bits of news, two facts which resolved to air his soap-bubble theories: *item*: all Leisler's reports, justifications, and petitions had been referred by the king to the new governor *and his council* to pass upon; *item*: the new governor himself, furnished with a goodly store of arms, ammunition, and troops, and a convoy of three fair vessels, had at last really set sail, and was coming, as fast as wind and wave would serve, to take possession of his government.

The commander's thoughts and feelings upon hearing this news will never be known. To this hour his point of view remains a fruitful theme for study and dispute. What matters it now? Whether he was upheld by the serene faith of a fatalist, fired by the blind infatuation of a zealot, or nerved by the stubborn, dogged courage of a beast at bay, the result

remains the same. Enough to know that he rose to the crisis and was equal to it ; that if a doubt or misgiving pierced his breastplate of confidence it carried no panic to his heart, nor shook the firm nerve with which he bided the event.

Such news could not be suppressed. It was blown abroad upon every wind to the farthest limits of the province. The result was quickly seen. Like a giant in toils the impatient people strained at their bonds. From highest to lowest all felt a strange stir in their blood. An ominous cloud of revolution loomed in the west. The poison of anarchy floated in the air. Work was given over, trade neglected ; placemen quaked in their shoes, household discipline was relaxed, saucy slaves went unwhipped. Even the immaculate stoops grew dusty, and the shining brass knockers, the pride of every Dutch vrouw's heart, lost their brightness.

Outside the walls, the overjoyed exiles, hearing in their retreat of the promised deliverance, came flocking to the gates, awaiting the signal to rush in. The country districts re-echoed with rumors of risings and riots. On every hand, from every side, low grumblings of fear and hate swelled day by day into a sullen and universal roar of execration.

As yet, however, rebellion but showed its teeth and spent itself in noise. Not the hardiest dared lift hand in actual revolt while yonder in the fort sat that man, watchful, unintimidated, ready with swift might to crush out the first show of insubordination.

Thus in harrowing suspense days and nights wore on. That cloud yonder in the west began to look fleet and sheer as a phantom, those soaring hopes of the exiles to come fluttering down like tailless

kites. What meant the delay? For weeks the little fleet had been overdue. Still the vaporous horizon was unbroken by a sail, and the mysterious voices of the ocean in their sighings, soughings, thunderings, brought no tidings of its fate.

In such distraction all the humdrum routine of life came to a stand-still, like the whirring machinery in a factory upon the shutting off of motive power. Living became simply waiting. One occupation alone went on, steadily, regularly, without let or interruption, — the roll-call from the fort still sounded forth upon the prick of the hour, and the train-bands went through their daily drill.

At last, one lowering morning, as the commander sat before his table at headquarters giving orders for the day, there came a gasping messenger with tidings of three vessels anchored off Sandy Hook.

The convoys! — but the leader of the fleet, the frigate "Archangel," which bore his Excellency, where was she? None could tell. Worthy Lieutenant Ingoldsby could only say that he had parted company with her in a gale, and that he expected her hourly to arrive. Meantime, what was to be said to the good lieutenant? Never since he came to power had Leisler been so at a loss. He took time to consider. Fateful moments! While he waited others moved. He still sat pondering the matter when news came that Van Cortlandt and Philipse had already slipped down the harbor to greet and welcome the stranger. He started to his feet as if with a futile movement to intercept them. Too late! for once he had been found wanting; for once his enemies had scored a point. One little lapse, one moment of indecision, and the whole course of history is changed to the end

of time. Of what avail now to send off the perfunctory greeting and half-hearted offer of hospitality which Milborne insists upon? He submits, but knows it is in vain. His enemies have had a hearing; the ears of the new-comer are already stuffed with calumnies. His case is prejudged.

Proof? — here it comes in the form of a messenger, a saucy rascal, from Ingoldsby, demanding the immediate surrender of the fort.

Behold the hand of his enemies already! But they shall miss their expected triumph. Like a lion aroused from his lair, the outraged man roared in defiance.

What followed is well known. The record of those days glows still in letters of fire upon pages of history as familiar as they are famous.

Day and night the commander stood at his post, eating and sleeping within the fort. Without a thought of retreat or concession he braced himself for the struggle.

Meantime, the family in the Strand were left to themselves, for Cobus was with his father. Ignorant, for the most part, of what was going on, having only a vague sense of some impending calamity, they sat and awaited the result.

Vrouw Leisler gave vent to her anxiety in a formula of lamentation which through constant repetition had lost significance and degenerated into an unheeded whine, wherewith she relieved her stuffed bosom and beguiled the tedium of her daily tasks. Hester was, in reality, little disturbed. These crises, in truth, had come to be an old story. At intervals, ever since her father had had to do with public affairs, there had been these recurring threats of dis-

aster and ruin. With so little real knowledge of the situation, how could she distinguish this case from others.

Besides, she had her own affairs to think of, and food enough for thought they gave her. Where was Steenie in all this time? Why had she heard nothing more from Tryntje? In the midst of these speculations and wonderings there came to her ears a rumor with a whole train of alarming possibilities. Barent had returned!

Her father, then, had kept his word. One half his threat was already fulfilled. She grew cold at the thought. Old fears started into life. Mary — Mary! Directly uprose the figure of that dumb bride, that cheerless wedding, that night of tempest, and her sister's white face vanishing in the gloom.

To whom else speak of all this? She must needs go again to Catalina. Despite public orders that women and children should keep shut up at home, she sallied forth. The streets were thronged with idle men gathered in groops, all busily talking and disputing, with now and then a bolder one haranguing his fellows.

In the dock she came upon the crier reading a proclamation. The crowd blocked her way; she listened perforce. The commander warned all honest people against the new-comers, a party of Papists and disaffected persons who had fled from their own country with good reason, and come hither with forged credentials and commissions, and impudently taken possession of the Stadthuys. He warned good citizens to give them no credence, yield them no aid or comfort, nor hold any parleyings with them.

Listening with half an ear to this familiar phraseology, and getting no sense of the gist of the procla-

mation, Hester pushed through the crowd and went her way.

Sounding the knocker at Dr. Staats's she was astonished to see the slave peer timorously through the upper half of the Dutch door before opening to admit her. Having seated herself upon a bench in the hall while the woman went to find Catalina, Hester was presently conscious of a hum of voices close at hand. It proved to be Dr. Staats and another talking in the parlor. The door was open, and she listened without choice. From their deep tones and rapid utterance it was evident they were much in earnest.

"Know you where the king's troops are quartered?" asked the doctor.

"They are fortified in the Stadthuys."

"There will be trouble," in an ominous tone.

"Surely he will give way."

"I doubt him; he is more rabid than ever. 'T was but yesterday he sent forth a proclamation forbidding the British soldiers to walk the streets, — mark ye, Mynheer Beekman, his Majesty's own troops; he would keep them cooped up."

"What hopes he to gain by such high-handed doings?"

"To drive them out! He says, as they cannot show credentials, they have no right here till his Excellency arrives, which —"

"Poh! 't is Milborne's talk that, you may be sure," broke in Mynheer Beekman impatiently; "he is a braying English ass! These men in the Stadthuys are the lieutenant-governor and secretary appointed by the Crown; these troops are sent by the king to establish the new government; to resist them —"

"Is sheer madness!"

"He must be reasoned with."

"As well reason with a beast; he flies into a rage at the least word of opposition."

"Beast let him be, it must be done," repeated Beekman, firmly. "This course he is taking is treason. We are known as his advisers; we shall be held to answer for it; moreover, the peace of the town and the lives of innocent men are at stake."

"'T will be like entering a lion's den," said Staats, hesitatingly.

"And if it were a very lion, no choice is left us. Come! will you go? To-morrow it may be too late."

A stir, a movement as of something close at hand in the air, drew the listener's notice. Raising her eyes, she saw reflected from a mirror on the opposite wall a slight figure in soft draperies, bent forward, with head canted upon one side and claw-like hands extended in an attitude of tense attention. Hester uttered an exclamation, and the reflection disappeared like a passing shadow.

Presently the slave came back with word that Catalina could not be found. Hester did not note the woman's faltering manner; she was scarcely disappointed. Her thoughts had taken a new direction. She remembered now the proclamation in connection with these words still sounding in her ears. Here was a crisis of a new sort. There might be war. Far from thinking such a result deplorable, she regarded it with equanimity; it opened up a whole new world of chances, by some of which the ugly old stumbling-blocks might be cast from her path, and some short sunny by-way to happiness revealed.

Several days passed. She heard nothing but the vague and conflicting reports brought in by the ser-

vants from the streets; the suspense was almost intolerable.

One morning she went out upon the stoop, to see if anything could be picked up from the passers-by. A slave was loitering in front of the door. Upon her appearance he quickly handed her a note and hurried away. She opened it eagerly; whatever the contents, they set her thoughts flying and her pulses bounding in a tremor of anticipation.

In the midst of her agitation came a squad of soldiers from the fort with a message to Vrouw Leisler from her imperious spouse, bidding the good dame get together her chattels and remove at once, bag and baggage, to the fort; the soldiers were to wait and escort her.

Instinctively Hester clutched the letter in her bosom. Incapable of counsel or comfort, she stared stupidly at her mother, while that distracted woman ran hither and thither, bawling contradictory orders to the panic-stricken slaves, and bewailing the absence of Mary and Cobus.

Striving in her bewilderment to decide upon her own course of action, Hester listened mechanically to the soldiers on the stoop.

"Will it come to blows, think ye?"

"Not a doubt of it, and straightway, too."

"But they yonder may give way."

"That will they not, nor budge a foot."

"Then will he drive them out like dogs."

"Well, zoo, they have had warning. Bully Joost went an hour ago to bid them lay down arms and be-gone, or hide the consequence."

"But think ye he will fire?"

"The guns are loaded, I tell ye."

“And pointed, too?”

“He gives them till nightfall.”

“Lieve Hemel!”

Like words heard in a nightmare, this talk sounded unnatural and awful. Had the crisis then come, and so soon? Was war indeed at hand? Uncertain what of good or ill it might bode to her, Hester was filled with a vague dread, and turned with willing hand but wandering thoughts to help her mother. And in good time; poor Vrouw Leisler was well-nigh at her wits' end. Never before in her peaceful life had she faced such an emergency.

To pack up and move the household gear gathered during a long married life, to do it at a moment's warning and as it were at the point of the bayonet, was a task far beyond any powers Nature had given her. Straightway her good sense and clear housewifely judgment flew to the winds. She yielded to panic. Without plan, choice, or system, she sent the frightened slaves to bring her most precious belongings to the ground-floor, where they were thrown pell-mell, — heavy bureaus, sofas, bedsteads, mirrors, feather-beds, china, glass, silver, linen, fire-irons, all piled in hopeless confusion, while the smoke from the smouldering logs in the fireplace, driven about by counter-drafts and mingled with clouds of dust, filled the house to suffocation.

In the midst of it all the soldiers outside became clamorous for haste. In despair the poor huysvrouw gave the word, and the rough troopers began loading her cherished goods with scant ceremony upon the ox-carts without.

Meantime the brief spring twilight was on the wane; a fierce wind blew out its flickering candle in the west.

This, it would seem, was the signal Hester had been awaiting. With a cloak thrown over her head, she stole into the garden. The house behind her resounded with uproar, — the shouts and oaths of the troopers, the running back and forth of slaves, the slamming of doors, and the intermittent bewailings of *Vrouw Leisler*.

Hester went straight to the bottom of the garden, where some large cherry-trees made a mass of shadow. Scarcely had she arrived when a tall figure leaped over the wall. Directly the two were folded in each other's arms.

"It is you!"

"Hester!"

"Oh, I feared you might never come back."

"I have come at last."

"But will you stay?"

"With God's help!"

"Oh, what will become of me, else?"

"What has happened?"

"*He* —"

"What?"

"He thinks to do with me as with *Mary*."

"He would marry you to another?"

"To yonder junker from Albany."

"Never!"

"He swears it shall be done."

"Never while I live! But have no fear, sweetheart. His day is almost done: the new governor is at hand, and hourly expected in town, and then he will be driven out of his kennel yonder."

"There will be no war, then?"

"War! poh! A war of words, perhaps, but that is all. He barks, but he dare not bite; this talk of

war is only to scare the people and keep them under."

"Hester! Hester!" The voice of Vrouw Leisler was heard frantically calling from the house. "Hester! where are you? We must go — Hester!"

The servants and slaves joined in the cry. They were coming to search the garden. Their footsteps could be heard approaching.

With a rapturous embrace the two were taking leave, when a rumbling sound like distant thunder broke upon the air.

The junker stood as if petrified, muttering through his set teeth, —

"The madman!"

"What is it?"

"He has dared to do it!"

"What?"

"He has fired upon the Stadthuys!"

"Then the war is begun!"

XXII.

CASTING back one last sad look of parting upon the deserted home, Vrouw Leisler marshalled her household, and turned to follow the groaning ox-cart. The good dame was a sight to look upon. Dumb with fright, pale with fatigue and anxiety, her dress in disorder, her face streaming with tears, her whole person begrimed with dust, hardly would her best friend have recognized in this woe-begone figure the tidy, well-appointed huysvrouw of yesterday.

Leading a younger sister by the hand, Hester walked at her mother's side, floundering ankle-deep in mire through the dark streets, still oozy from the spring thaws.

Arrived at the fort, they found, as it seemed, Bedlam let loose. The open space between the buildings was crowded with refugees, encamped on the bare ground amid tumultuous heaps of their own belongings, while in discordant chorus arose the wailing of women, the rattle of arms, the shrill crying of children, the ribald laughter of soldiers, and the muttered cursing of angry citizens groping with lanterns through the chaos in vain search of their own gear.

More dreadful than all, huge mysterious forms from time to time loomed suddenly out of the darkness, vanishing again with frightful snortings and gruntings as some restless searcher came upon one of the drove of horses, cattle, or hogs, roaming loose in the pent inclosure.

What wonder poor Vrouw Leisler and her daughters gazed about them in dismay? Deserted by their escort, refused admission at headquarters where those within were tragically engaged making history, unheeded by the busy folks flying past on every hand, they knew not where to go or what to do, and stood for a space dazed and helpless.

The sight of the loaded ox-cart backed against the wall at last decided the question for the good dame. There, at least, were her possessions,—all that was left to her of home,—and she would stick by them.

With the help of some warm quilts which had been thrown over the load for the protection of the furniture, they were all at last snugly disposed among the nooks and crannies of the load; and the honest vrouw herself, having carefully tucked in her children, soon joined the universal chorus with a nasal trump which held its own against any trooper of them all.

As for Hester, she took no note of the strangeness and discomfort of their state. From the moment the ponderous gates closed behind them she had acted like one in a stupor. Did that ominous clang first suggest to her that she had walked unconsciously into a prison? Why else did she strain her eyes so persistently through the darkness to make out the big portal, and listen with stifled heart-beat to the thud of the sentinel's halberd as he stalked back and forth on his march? Did she mayhap remember her father's threat, and realize that she was now more than ever at his mercy?—that all chance of escape was cut off, and the junker from Albany close at hand?

Unconsciously these fears and forebodings, becom-

ing mingled with the sensuous impressions of her surroundings, renewed themselves in grotesque complications, faded little by little to vagueness, lapsed into nothingness, — nature had claimed her due.

She slept, but through her sleep echoed the boom of that dreadful cannon, accompanied by visions of war, of burning homes, of blood-red skies, accompanied by frantic and futile efforts to escape some formless evil through paths blocked at every turn — oh, horror! — with the mangled and lifeless form of her beloved Steenie.

Thus, haunted by nightmare, the darkness wore away. However dreary and long-drawn, it yet passed like a tale that is told to the day that followed. That day was like a thousand years. It began with cattle lowing and children wailing for their breakfast. But there was no breakfast; the terrors of war were already realized. Catching sight of Cobus pressing through the crowd, his delighted mother made shift to seize him by the doubtlet. Filled with the importance of his mission, the bustling junker angrily shook her off, with no word or look of recognition, and went his way. The poor woman broke forth into loud sobs. A rough-looking trooper near by came to her relief. He fetched from the mess-room some loaves of bread, which they were fain to wash down with a cup of water from the spring.

Meanwhile the crowd within is reinforced by a larger one from without. The gates of the fort are besieged by a throng of citizens, — men of the closet and men of affairs, soldiers, parsons, stout burghers, and horny-handed mechanics, — sober-minded men one and all, who have come to implore the comman-

der to stop in his mad course and take counsel with his fellow-townsmen.

He answers them with another roar of the cannon.

A shudder runs through the serried mass of people gathered about the door of headquarters. There is a movement from the direction of the Stadthuys. Presently comes a whisper that the well-aimed bolt has killed two of the royal troopers. Directly a shout is heard. Rising, swelling at every turn, prolonged by myriad voices, it comes sweeping down upon the wind of human breath till all earth and heaven ring with the horrid cry of murder!

The day yet young in time is hoary in experience. Events in their swift succession tread close upon each other's heels.

While the people still await in hushed silence the result of the commander's boldness, comes a panting messenger shouldering his way up to headquarters. Those about the door listen with intent ears; Hester presses up with the foremost. There is an interminable pause, — a whole minute of silence. Then is heard a roar of rage followed by a volley of oaths.

The crowd sways to and fro in its fierce desire to force a way in. The suspense is short. In a moment more the news comes flying out from lip to lip.

"The block-house at Smiet's Vly has surrendered to the enemy!"

Realizing from her father's outburst, and from the looks of those around, that this is in some especial way a calamity, Hester, hiding a wild throb of exultation in her heart, turns back to her mother.

On the way she came suddenly upon a well-known figure. Uttering a cry, she put out her hands in an attitude half of greeting, half of aversion, — it was

Barent! He did not speak, he only stood and looked at her with that expression of mute suffering one sees in a dumb beast. Their clothes almost touched as they passed, yet they passed without a word.

Before the brood of fears and misgivings awakened by the incident had time to nest in her bosom, it was swept away by the rush of events. Her name was called from the midst of the crowd; she turned, — there was Catalina! The two leaped into each other's arms. Dr. Staats was with his daughter. Being shown to Vrouw Leisler's retreat upon the cart, he left Catalina for a time in her charge.

The two girls had whole volumes to tell; they clung to each other, chattering like magpies.

"Mother is not here — she fears not the guns — she would not come with us — she makes friends with those yonder — she sends wine and food to the Stadthuys — she bids them welcome and hopes the war will go on."

"I too — I hope and pray it may."

"Go on?"

"Yes, yes, — sh-h! Never tell! 'tis my only chance. I am in prison here; that other one is come from Albany."

"Barent!"

"Within these very walls!"

"Hester!"

"Father has sworn we shall be married."

"Never! — never! — never!"

"But if the war holds out, there is hope; for —"

"Eh?"

"*He* has come home —"

"So!"

"And came straightway to see me."

In her preoccupation Hester failed to note the shudder with which her last words were received, the relaxed clasp of the arms, or the averted face.

"He swears, too, I shall never be sacrificed while he lives."

"What need to doubt, then? What need to fear? What need to care for anything that may come?"

For a moment Hester was aroused from her self-concentration not so much by the words as by the reckless, half-desperate note in her friend's voice.

"Why do you talk? Why do you complain? Why do you come to me? Would you have everything?"

"Eh?"

"He is here, you say?"

"Yes."

"He loves you?"

"More than ever."

"Go then, go away! I will hear no more of your talk; you come to me for pity for such happiness!" With a bitter laugh, "Go thank heaven for your good fortune!"

"But — but," stammered the amazed Hester, "am I not in a prison here? What help can ever reach me if —"

Turning aside, Catalina covered her face with her hands, and suppressed a sob which expended itself in a mute, inward convulsion. It was only for a moment. Directly facing about, she put her arms about Hester and said, gently, —

"Dear Hester — have faith! these times are not forever. You will be happy — I feel it — I know it — I" — the clear voice was clouded by a passing huskiness — "I *hope* it! I must go join my father."

"But —"

Hester made no effort to retain her friend, or to discover the cause of her changed looks and bearing. It was indeed no time to dwell on trifles. Even the momentous crisis in her own life, with all its train of fears and hopes, was speedily forgotten in the larger interests of that fateful day, — that day of which each long-drawn minute came fraught with intenser interest, like the scenes of a melodrama.

This feeling of self-forgetfulness was in the air. The people — all other thought, purpose, occupation, gone — looked on in breathless interest at the two combatants. Everything, as it seemed, hung upon the issue, — home, family, earthly-havings, life. Yet ventured they not to intermeddle. The moral force of one man dominated the town.

As the day wore on it was whispered that the commander was planning some grand stroke for the morrow. The rumor flew over the wall and abroad amongst the people. It reached the Stadthuys. Despite sneers and scoffing, it caused a sensation. There was straightway a mustering of resources, a strengthening of defences; there was even a consultation.

Night came at last. A fog crept in from seaward. With ghostly march it stole over the city, climbing the steeples, wrapping the windmills in its spectral drapery, invading every little street and alley till the sparse lanterns looked like fireflies in a mist.

Dank and dripping, a fisherman came groping his way out of the fog up to the Stadthuys. With scant ceremony he broke in upon the sitting of a half-score anxious gentlemen there gathered, and blurted out his message.

Directly there was a shout.

“It has come!”

“ Eh ! ”

“ The ‘ Archangel ’ ! ”

“ And the governor ? ”

“ He is here, — yonder, anchored in the Narrows.”

“ Huzza ! ”

Amidst a wild scurrying hither and thither, a dancing about of lanterns and torches, a clashing of arms, — a joyous hurly-burly, — a committee was sent post-haste to advise his Excellency of the critical state of affairs.

Despite the fact that it was nearly midnight, the governor came directly ashore ; and with clangor of bells, blazing of torches, blare of trumpets, and a hoarse babel of human voices, his commission was read and he was sworn into office, together with certain of his councillors.

These midnight jubilations failed not speedily to reach the ears of that little band of watchers at the fort. All understood what had happened, and silently fixed their eyes upon their chief. As he sat gazing at a heavy iron inkstand on the table before him, the flickering candle showed on his gaunt and bloodless face the expression of one slowly recovering from a shock.

“ ’Tis fitting you should send him a greeting,” said Milborne, the first to rally from his consternation.

The commander waved his hand in denial, with a gesture of contempt for so feeble and tardy a concession.

“ Sooner or later you must recognize him. There is no escape. ’Tis better do it of your own motion than upon compulsion.”

The commander made no answer. A silence as of death fell upon the chamber. A small eternity

elapsed, when a thunderous pounding at the gates came mercifully to break the suspense. The commander sat as if carved out of stone. There was a bustle outside swelling to a tumult, then a loud voice at the door. After a moment's parley in came striding Ensign Stoll, saying Ingoldsby was at the gate demanding the instant surrender of the fort in the name of Governor Slougher.

The commander sat doggedly, and never raised his eyes.

"What answer shall I make?"

The commander held his peace.

"Some answer must needs be sent," suggested Milborne, impatiently.

"Go ye to them, Stoll, and demand to see their authority for this under the king's sign-manual."

A murmur of protestation arose from his own friends and followers, many of whom had now crowded into the room. In contempt of all objection, Leisler waved his hand impatiently. Stoll nodded and disappeared. The faithful henchman had his cue.

Waked from sleep by the unusual bustle, Hester and her mother learned that something of moment was taking place. Following the crowd which now held its way unchallenged, they pushed on into the commander's room. With locks astray and startled eyes, the bewildered women turned this way and that, to learn from the disjointed talk what was the matter.

Pressing to the front, they caught sight of Leisler sitting in his chair. They exchanged a look. It was true, then; they both saw it,—a shocking change had taken place in him. Vrouw Leisler uttered a

spasmodic sound between a gasp and a sob, and clutched Hester's hand. Both kept their eyes fixed in fascination upon the transformed figure in the chair. His face, in the candle-light, had the hue of granite; the bony outline of his jaw, his eyebrows, the flaring cartilages of his nose, wore in their hard rigidity the very texture of the stone. As the shadows lay, his eyes were lost in two cavernous pits, while his grizzled locks fell straight and heavy upon his shoulders. Deaf to the buzz of wondering comment in the room, unconscious of the public gaze riveted upon him, he sat with the brooding look of Michael Angelo's figure upon the Medicean tomb and as motionless.

As the two women compared notes in a whisper, a voice at Hester's elbow startled her:—

"You may finish the night in your own house if you will, *Vrouw Leisler*."

Both turned and saw Dr. Staats pushing his slow way to the door.

"Ei?"

"What mean ye?"

"'T is all over here."

"The war?"

"Yes; the new governor is come."

Hester's heart gave a great bound. Steenie, then, was right. The hour of deliverance was at hand. She clutched her mother and whispered hoarsely,—

"Come, let us go home."

But *Vrouw Leisler* only shook her head, and glared fixedly at her husband.

Hester followed suit, and again she felt a sinking at the heart. If the new governor had indeed come and the revolution was accomplished, why did her

father still sit there holding the crowded room in awed subjection?

Busied with these thoughts, Hester presently became aware that the hum of conversation about her had ceased. Everybody listened. Another parley was going on at the gates. The officer of the guard came in to say it was Ingoldsby again. The man looked at Leisler and hesitated. The latter made a gesture for him to proceed.

"He demands the instant release of Bayard and Nichols."

A flash came and went in the commander's eyes, and it seemed he grew a shade paler.

"And he further orders your Excellency and them you call your councillors — they are his own words — to report yourselves forthwith at the Stadthuys."

There was a pause — a long pause — in which a pin-fall might have been heard in the room. As before, Milborne spoke first.

"You have no resource but to go."

Without changing his position, without taking his eyes from the iron inkstand, the commander at last spoke.

"The fort cannot be handed over in the night; 'tis against military law. I will not do it. I am answerable to their Majesties. You, Milborne, you La Noy, go to them yonder and explain."

Both men began with one accord to object.

"No more talk. Go!"

Without further ado, the two envoys set forth. Silence again settled upon the room and its anxious occupants. Even the whisperings ceased, and nothing broke the stillness but the plashing of the waves without.

Scarcely fifteen minutes elapsed. It seemed a cycle. There came another pounding at the gates. The officer duly appeared to report. He told his story in few words.

“It is Ingoldsby again. Milborne and La Noy are thrown in irons. He demands the immediate surrender of the fort.”

Leisler seized the table with a sudden clutch. A throe convulsed his whole frame, and big drops of sweat started out on his clammy forehead.

“What shall I tell him?” asked the officer.

“Tell him to go to hell!”

XXIII.

A MURMUR of consternation burst from every lip in the crowded room when the officer withdrew bearing Leisler's defiant message. This first outspoken indication of revolt awoke the commander to a sudden consciousness of the crowd.

"Away with ye!" he shouted, springing to his feet in a fury. "Coward Papists and time-servers! Go! Go, I say, and leave me alone!"

He drove them before him like a flock of sheep. At the door one dared turn and brave his wrath,—a well-known figure, a homely face lighted up with a look of love and tenderness. In this hour of trial and desertion his faithful vrouw still loved and believed in him. He staggered forward and fell upon her neck with an outburst like the sob of a brute beast in distress.

It was but a passing weakness; directly his face chilled and hardened, and leading the weeping woman to the door he gently thrust her out.

Bewildered by the startling events of the day, by her father's audacity, by the failure of the prophecies that all would be quickly settled when the new governor arrived, Hester went back to their lodgings in the ox-cart, where a slave was watching over her sleeping sister.

One by one all her doubts and fears came back swarming. Why should her father yield to this new governor more than to the old? Who could say he would not drive him away as he had done Nicholson?

Then what would become of her? What would become of Steenie? How could they ever meet again?

Busied with these thoughts she did not notice that her mother had tarried behind, until she beheld the clumsy matron, several minutes later, climbing back, with much puffing and panting, to her place in the cart. Neither did the fact that the good dame was weeping awaken in her any surprise, such a state seemed so in keeping with their surroundings.

"'T is not like him," sobbed the vrouw.

"Who?"

"Jacob. 'T is like some other."

"So?"

"He is wasting away; he has grown an old man; 't is killing him!" continued the poor dame.

"And now we cannot go home," said Hester, thought-centred at her own axis of the ellipse which circumscribed the interests of the moment. "The war is not over, and we must needs stay here."

"Look, look! See him walk yonder!" cried the anxious wife, pointing to a dark figure striding up and down past the lighted window in the governor's house.

Hester looked without seeing.

"The man is crazy. Why goes he not to bed? 'T is sleep he needs. Ye may see he has not slept for weeks. 'T is past midnight, too, for the cocks are crowing. Did ye hear the cocks crow, Hester?"

Used all her life to her mother's maundering, Hester gave no heed to the question. Lying wrapped in her quilt, squeezed in between two heavy pieces of furniture, with her face upturned to the midnight sky, she watched the fog roll away like a curtain, and the stars shine forth like flecks of fire thrown hap-hazard over

the black canopy, while she lay and thought, and thought, and thought.

"See, now he writes," went on the dame. "Now he tears it. At it again. Foolish man, as if there were not enough fair daylight to write in! Ei, that will do no better. 'T is the very same with me. I must ever blot three or four before fetching forth one that will serve. What now? What now? He throws all down and stamps about. O Jacob! Jacob!"

Thus through the night the faithful heart watched that lone figure wrestling with his task, — ah, futile task! — watched quite oblivious of other things going on about her.

Yet there *were* other things going on, and things very significant; for it turned out that Vrouw Leisler and her daughter were not the only watchers in the fort that night.

Down in the soldiers' quarters dark groups were gathered, and sullen mutterings were heard, which, as the hours went by, grew to outspoken words and very positive utterance. The rats were taking counsel whether the moment had come to desert the sinking ship.

Presently the dame saw another tall shadow in the lighted room. She recognized at once the familiar and characteristic outline. It approached the first figure writing in the chair and seemed to speak. The words she could not hear were these: —

"Hola!"

"Go away!"

"Ei, so will I, but — but hearken to me first!"

"Go away! Ye are drunk!"

"No m-matter for that. I come to — hic — put a flea in your ear."

"Will ye go?" with a touch of fierceness.

"Not I."

"Will ye not?" jumping up threateningly. "Get back to the pothouse, ye damned fool, and leave me to my work!"

"I — I — budge not — hic — a step till I tell ye."

The incensed man seized a heavy halberd from the table; but directly, with a muttered exclamation, threw it down.

"Speak out, then. What drunken drivel have ye to say?"

"Mynheer, I am your very good friend. Ye know — hic — know that. Well, I — I say drop this and g-get ye gone from here like — hic — like the wind."

"Ei?"

"Yonder rascals," pointing over his shoulder, "are plo-plotting against ye."

The commander nodded with a look of contempt.

"They — are — are going to give up the fort and — and ye — hic — along with it as soon as the day dawns."

The listener showed no surprise.

"So true as I live!" persisted the visitor.

The commander for all answer picked up his pen and dipped it into the iron inkstand.

"Hear ye wh-what I say? Get ye out of this wh-while 't is dark! See,—ye may put on my hat and cloak and c-copy my walk — straight and st-steady, mark ye! And who — who's the wiser — ei?"

The commander shook his head sadly, and said with a touch of kindness, —

"Go get ye back to the pot-house, poor devil! 'T is pity so good a heart had not a better head. Go, man! go and leave me to my work!"

"Wel zoo! the f-fools'll never — never — hic — all die."

So long a vigil naturally made Vrouw Leisler and Hester drowsy in the morning. When they awoke, the sun was shining brightly in their faces and all was bustle about them.

What was going on? It was easy enough to see. The gates were thrown wide open, the rats were stealing away in a long dark line, and the hapless ship was sinking fast.

The bewildered women sat up in the cart — their caps awry, their hair dishevelled, the clumsy bed-quilts still wrapped about them — and rubbed their eyes.

"Mother, mother, look there!" cried Hester, suddenly pointing to a group advancing towards them from headquarters.

"Jacob! 'Tis he, Jacob! Heavenly Father, what has happened him? Jacob, where are ye going? Jacob, will ye not heed me?"

Accompanied by his late councillors, and guarded by a troop of strange soldiers, the commander passed on, nor cast so much as a look upon the bawling woman.

"Come, mother, come!" cried Hester, jumping from the cart. "See, the gates are open! Everybody is going; we may go too!"

At this amazing news, the dame, speedily tying up her hair and ordering her dress, lost no time in following in the wake of the wondering procession.

Outside the walls it seemed all the world had gone mad. The air resounded with shouts and laughter, flags were flying, bells were ringing, slaves were



"Guarded by a troop of strange soldiers the commander passed on."

dancing in wild abandon, while up and down the thronged streets women stood crowded upon the stoops, tasting the sweet spring air like prisoners just released from a dungeon.

Heeding nothing of all this, Vrouw Leisler with her two daughters, following ever in the wake of the procession, marched fast towards the Stadthuys.

By dint of running, elbowing, and pushing, they came up with the head of the line in time to press into the council-chamber upon the heels of the prisoners.

There sat the new governor, stern and expectant, surrounded by his council. Turning to view the prisoners, Hester noted that Milborne and La Noy had been added to their number.

The governor straightway proceeded to subject the leading culprits to a short and sharp examination. Hester looked with awe upon the magistrate that he dared address her father in such a tone. In breathless suspense she awaited the explosion to follow. To her amazement there was no explosion, but an answer most humble and submissive. As if doubting her own senses she cast a look at her mother. The good dame stood with eyes and mouth agape.

But already the summary examination is ended; the governor is saying something to the prisoners.

"You are committed to prison, pending your examination before a proper tribunal, on a charge of being taken in open and armed rebellion against their Majesties; clerk, make out the commitments!"

While the clerk is busy with his task and the governor is whispering apart with his council, there is heard a bustle at the door. The crowd gives way to admit two strange figures,—figures squalid, haggard,

ghostly, with sunken eyes and matted hair, who blink in the blinding sunlight and totter as they walk.

At an exclamation from Milborne, Leisler looks up; a deep flush overspreads his face, and a hangdog look of guilt gleams in his tell-tale eyes as he quickly turns away.

A cry of execration loud and deep rises from the crowd. They too have recognized the strangers; they too understand their presence here, — understand why Mynheer Van Cortlandt hastens forward to embrace them, and why his Excellency receives the squalid wretches with such honor: —

“Colonel, your name is well known to me; Mr. Nichols, I am much honored by your acquaintance. I congratulate myself that I have been the means of delivering you both from your cruel imprisonment.”

Well, too, the watchful bystanders note and understand the triumphant look with which, as he signs the warrants of the new prisoners, his Excellency says to the old: —

“And now, gentlemen, as their Majesties have appointed you to be my advisers, it were well you should be sworn in here and now of the council. Officer, here are the papers; take you the prisoners and see them committed to the dungeons in the fort, there to be kept safe and fast pending further proceedings.”

The officer obeyed. Amidst the howling and jubilations of an excited mob the culprits were led back to the fort, where the shackles just dropped from the shrunk shank of Colonel Bayard had scarcely grown cold before they were hung upon the stalwart leg of his oppressor.

XXIV.

“ I HAD fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living,” — this was Dominie Selyn’s text next Lord’s Day morning.

The sermon which followed was an anthem of thanksgiving, a pæan of praise. It sounded the keynote of universal jubilation. The people’s joy can be but feebly imagined ; it had the thrill of those who awake to wholesome daylight after a prolonged nightmare. The world was once more a place of health and comfort. The sunshine seemed again a gift from God in which they could bask without qualm ; the refreshing sea-breeze, a breath of heaven which they could suck in freely to their famished lungs. Again friend could greet friend without suspicion ; again neighbors talk in the chimney nook in the old free, outspoken fashion. Even nature seemed in sympathy with this ecstatic mood. Just freed from the icy bonds of winter, the brooks and creeks ran frolicking to the sea ; and through every pore in the earth-crust came bursting upward a wealth of verdure and fragrance.

Vrouw Leisler had boundless faith in her husband’s ability to take care of himself ; and although at first shocked by his arrest, she soon recovered from her alarm. Indeed, she presently plucked up spirit to

inveigh sharply against this high-handed proceeding on the part of the new governor, who, as she repeatedly declared in the bosom of her own family, would very soon learn better than to meddle with her Jacob. Looking, therefore, upon his imprisonment as a temporary measure pending the trial about to take place, she gave herself up heart and soul to setting her dismantled house in order and getting all things in readiness to give her spouse a rousing welcome on his return.

This interval of work and waiting was brightened to the good wife by one blessing; since Milborne's imprisonment Mary had come home to live, and the delighted mother rejoiced again in the aid and fellowship of her favorite daughter.

Cobus, perhaps upon some hint from his father, was as busy at the shop in Winckel Street as was his mother at home. Damp and mildew, dust and cobwebs, had formed there a close and thriving corporation, so that Cobus found it no easy task to bring back the little warehouse to its old appearance of thrift and order.

Meantime the new governor, directed and urged on by his council, proceeded with vigor in the public business. Chief in importance and interest among the tasks awaiting the new administration was the disposition of the prisoners. A court was speedily organized, and their trial began.

Every step in the proceedings was of course watched with profound interest by the household in the Strand. A body of their friends and relatives attended every day at court, and in the evening the news was discussed, point by point, in the family circle. Their consternation at the charges of treason and murder

was quickly burned away in the hot flame of their indignation at the composition of the court.

"They are all Papists!" cried Cobus.

"And his worst enemies at that," joined in his mother. "Wait till the king, — wait, I say, till their Majesties hear of these doings!"

"Wait only till he himself gets out of prison!" muttered Cobus between his clinched teeth.

"So! 't will be a sorry day for these fine gentlemen, — that!" concluded the dame, wagging her head.

Or another evening it would be: —

"They are proving nothing; they can find nothing against him."

"See there now! What told I ye, Mary? What said I, Cobus, from the first?"

"All goes to show that he was in by authority of the king, and did his duty."

"Be sure of that!"

"And that the province was never so governed before."

"No, nor ever will be again; he was not sent by the Lord for nothing to this work!"

Hester heard and took part in this talk. From whatever point of view, the trial was a matter of vital and determining moment to her. But since the result was a foregone conclusion, — as Dr. Staats, Dr. Beekman, Mr. Walters, and Cobus all agreed it was, — she dismissed it from her mind as a subject of anxiety, and busied herself with other besieging thoughts.

In the hurly-burly of the moment she failed for some time to realize that she was free. The tardy discovery was made at last without a thrill. The

prospect of its short duration robbed the precious liberty of all its value. In vain she repeated over and over to herself, —

“It has come, it is here, I have it, that long-expected freedom.” Like a mocking echo a voice came back, —

“But where is the long-expected happiness it was to bring?”

As if in answer to the unknown scoffer, Steenie came one day and boldly asked for her at the door. The slave who opened it said she was in the garden. Hurrying thither, he saw a girlish figure among the trees. He advanced with eager strides. Instead of coming to meet him, the girl marched as fast as she could go towards the gate.

The junker's surprise was but for a moment. He recognized the fugitive; the old mischievous gleam shone in his eyes as, clearing the tulip-bed at a bound, he hastened after the retreating maiden, crying, —

“Hola there, Catalina! Catalina, are you running away from old friends?”

There was no answer.

“Hola, I say,” springing and intercepting her; “why do you run away?”

“I am not running away,” she answered, turning with an air of dignity, her cheeks meantime flushing, and her eyes looking to this side and that in the effort to avoid his.

“Let us shake hands, then; 't is a long time since we met,” extending his own huge palm.

“There is no occasion to shake hands.”

“Have you then no greeting for an old friend?”

“We are not old friends.”

“So?” with an amused look; “then surely 't is

time we were. We are old friends to Hester. Hester loves us both, and we should love each other."

"I hold not myself bound to love everything that Hester does."

They were close to the gate by this. Catalina reached to lift the latch. He put out his hand to prevent it. She turned with an indignant protest on her lips, her eyes all the time fastened on the ground.

"Pray you, now," said the junker, looking as if tempted to catch up this sprig of humanity, with its odd, brilliant coloring and its disdainful face, "do not go!"

"I must go," with a tone of emphasis, but with a look of hesitation.

"Come, now," he coaxed, as he gently, but boldly too, crowded her away from the gate. "Tell me of Hester; where is she?"

"She is here at hand to speak for herself," turning back promptly towards the gate.

"How is she, then?"

"She is well enough."

"I am but just come home. I want to meet all my friends; I am glad to see everybody I knew in the old days. Give my duty to your worshipful mother; tell her I heard of her kind offices in my behalf. I hope to wait upon her soon."

By his adroit management they were again headed back towards the garden and slowly walking down the path, every step taken by the reluctant Catalina having the force of a repeated protest.

"But where is Hester hiding all this time? They told me she was in the garden."

"Go seek her out, then, I pray!" turning suddenly and hurrying towards the gate.

"Stay! hold! say good-by, at least!" hastening after her.

"I cannot stop!"

"Come, now!"

"I will not."

"You shall not go, I swear, till you shake hands!" and with a long stride he swept past her and blocked the path.

She stopped, dumb with indignation.

"Come, now!"

She cast upward a searching look at his face. He held out his hand pleadingly.

"Let us be friends, I say."

There was a moment's pause; then like a flash she thrust out her mite of a palm, lightly touched his, and bounded away.

The junker stood gazing after her with a puzzled look, when a crunching of gravel behind drew his attention, and turning he saw Hester coming with a pretty blush of welcome to meet him.

It was like no other meeting they ever had. Unlike that sweet early intercourse, so free from care of anything but themselves and the moment, it was also far different from their later stolen interviews. They studied each other now with covert curiosity, while both felt the constraint of self-consciousness. What an age had elapsed since those early times!—an age which had left them ripe in experience. Meantime, there was so much to say they knew not where to begin; and what with it all, actually walked up and down several minutes in silence.

Attributing this constraint to their surroundings, Steenie suggested going to their old haunt in the Magde Paetje.

Passing through the house to get Hester's hood and cloak, they came upon Cobus, who had run up on some errand from the court. Recognizing Steenie, he cast on the two a black look, and called out bluntly, —

“ You had best keep in-doors, sister, while the town is in the hands of thieves and pirates ! ”

Hester treated her brother's advice with silent contempt, while Steenie towered serenely aloft, blind and deaf to his peevishness.

Going somewhat roundabout, they picked their way through Smiet's Vly, crossed the foaming brook, and wandered at leisure up the narrowing dell.

The season was earlier than at that other time so long ago. The air was still a little raw, the ground not yet quite freed from its winter thrall. Neither liverwort nor saxifrage was yet in bloom, and the pollards by the brookside showed not a touch of the furry little catkins folded tight in each swelling bourgeon.

There was, however, much to remind them of their former walk together in the little valley, as they sauntered along hand in hand, stopping only to break here and there an osier switch or skirt dry-shod some marshy place in the path. But for their hand-clasp one might have thought they had quarrelled, so little they talked. Even Steenie was tongue-tied. The brief speeches they made were for the most part commonplace. Yet the low whistling with which he beguiled the way, and the odd snatches of song she hummed, were but the brimmings-over of a speechless content. For the rest, it is quite certain that no possible words could have added to the thoroughness of their communion.

Even when they climbed into a little sun-warmed niche in a ledge overlooking the town, — where tucked snugly in by themselves the world seemed shut out, — they were not garrulous. Indeed, the supreme eloquence of silence never more clearly appeared than when, later, Steenie strove to formulate the emotional significance of the moment.

“At last we are happy.”

Hester stirred as if he had awaked her from a delightful dream, and answered presently with a long-drawn sigh, —

“Ah, but for so short a time!”

“Why say you that, darling?”

“Because ’t is true; because as soon as *he* comes home he will put an end to all, as you know.”

A strange look passed over the junker's face, yet not so much passed over as came and went in it like the opening and shutting of a lid. He made a movement to speak, but checked himself.

“’T will be worse for us then than ever,” went on Hester, unconscious of all this facial disturbance; “he will be so sore at the treatment he has received.”

It is a sufficient proof of her own preoccupation that she found nothing noteworthy in his continued silence.

“You have not thought of this?”

“Yes, ’t is no straight course we have to run; there are other stumbling-blocks in the way.”

“You mean your own family,” she put in quickly.

“Remember what they have suffered.”

“They hate *him*, and they will hate me.”

“They cannot when they come to know you.”

“Which will never be.”

“But it shall be, I say.”

"And do you think the time will ever come" — playing with a silver button on his waistcoat —
"when —"

"When?"

"— when we shall be left alone and suffered to do as we choose?"

"Yes, if we have but patience to wait —"

"I could wait a thousand years," she murmured.

"And if we but hold fast to each other," he concluded, dryly.

She looked up to study his face. He was gazing at her with a confident smile. Directly she saw it was a joke. And what a capital joke, too! They both laughed outright. He kissed her upturned forehead and called her a goose; and she, playfully patting his cheeks, justified the epithet by asking, —

"And do you think we *shall* hold fast to each other?"

Thereupon they both laughed again. Indeed, the joke was so good that it lasted them for the rest of the day; for when the outstretching shadows warned them to go home, a little preliminary which marked their setting-forth brought it up again. Nay, even when they had reached the house, and stood on the porch swinging back and forth by their clasped hands, Hester cried in playful warning as she swung out over the edge of the stairs, —

"If you hold me not fast now, I may get my death-fall."

"Never fear! 'T is you will let go first!"

"Indeed!" with a show of indignation.

"Else will we hold hands here forever."

"If you are never free till I let go my hold —"
She stopped and listened.

"What's that?"

It was only a disturbance in the street,—several citizens hurrying in the direction of the Stadthuys.

"Hola there!" shouted Steenie, hailing from the porch. "What is it?"

"The jury."

"Ei?"

"A verdict."

"What — what!"

"Guilty!"

The junker seized Hester in his arms; his eyes shone, his face flushed, he knew not whether to shout in triumph or whisper in condolence. She looked simply stupefied.

"It may be false. I will go learn the truth and bring you word."

He embraced her hurriedly, and turned to the stairs.

Stirred by a conflict of emotions she could not analyze, Hester gasped, —

"I — I — take me! I must go too!"

"Quick, then! let us run!"

Hand in hand they hurried along, keeping to the middle of the street and clearing the puddles with flying leaps.

"Guilty of what?" panted Hester, as they went.

"Of — of — of withstanding his Excellency, Governor Sloughter," said Steenie, pushed for an answer.

Reassured by this simple statement of the case, Hester in a measure recovered her self-possession before arriving at the Stadthuys. Here they found the courtroom already packed to suffocation, and the narrow hall and stairway fast filling up. With much ado they squeezed into a niche within earshot of the door. The

crowd stood with eyes and ears in strained attention. A murmur of voices was heard from within. Suddenly there came a sharp rap and a cry of "Silence!" There was a general stir in the audience; every one rose upon tip-toe and canted his head to listen.

"What is it?" whispered Hester.

"Hush! the court is addressing the prisoner."

Breathless and pulseless, the anxious girl listened; she heard a voice declaiming in solemn monotone, but not a word reached her.

Presently the voice ceased, and there was a movement among those standing near. Two men came pushing their way out. It was Dr. Gerardus Beekman and Dr. Staats, both pale and deeply agitated.

"Ei? what was it? I could not hear," said Beekman.

"He is to be taken yonder without the walls —" The speaker paused and stammered; there before him, with tragic face, stood Hester, drinking in his words.

"Well, and then?" demanded Beekman, eagerly.

"The old form," muttered Staats, taking refuge in Latin: "*Ibidem suspendatur per collum et vivus ad terram prosternatur. Interiora sua extra ventrem suum capiantur. Ipsoque vivente comburantur. Caput suum amputetur. Quodque corpus suum in quatuor partes dividatur. Et quod caput et quateria illa ponantur ubi dominus rex ea assignare voluerit.*"

Understanding nothing of all this, but filled with a vague fear, Hester frantically forced her way in through the serried crowd to the railing. Eagerly her eyes sought out the prisoner. He stood motionless within the dock, with cold beads of sweat hanging like dew-

drops on his rugged forehead. In a moment all was clear. Sickened with horror, she felt the room begin to reel about her, and straightway a blessed veil of unconsciousness fell between her and all further sights and sounds.

XXV.

ONE morning, not long after the sentence had been pronounced, the chief culprits were disturbed in their dungeon by the rattling of chains and the drawing of heavy bolts.

On a rude stone bench opposite the door sat Leisler, his elbows on his knees, his chin propped on his clinched fist, his eyes, their gaze inturned, bent outwardly upon the floor. Thus, day and night, he had been sitting since his return to the cell, while his restless companion, on a bench over against him, talked without pause.

Now, aroused by the noise in that direction, Milborne looked curiously towards the door, which opened to admit three persons, whom, in the dim light, he did not directly recognize.

His doubt was short-lived. A sobbing little figure came groping in and knelt by his side; at the same moment a loud wail broke upon the air, as Vrouw Leisler threw herself upon her husband's neck. Meanwhile Cobus, lingering in the corner, turned his face to the wall.

For many minutes not a word was said. It was the elder huysvrouw who first spoke.

"'T is an awful, awful thing; but take heart, Jacob! They dare not harm ye. Take heart, I say. We have appealed to the king. When his Majesty hears o' this, he'll see then what comes o' sending over his new

governors. Ei! ei! there'll be a stir when he hears o' this, never fear!"

The condemned man mechanically put his arm about his wife, as she crouched by his side, but gave no other sign of heeding her words.

"Jacob! Jacob! speak to me, man! What is this, — chains on ye? How dare they? Look, Mary! See, Cobus! They have fetters on him, — fetters, like a common wretch. Oh! oh! oh! wait till their Majesties hear this! After all ye did for them, after having them proclaimed at cost of life and limb, after saving the province from the Papists, after letting your own affairs go to wrack and ruin! Wait! Wait till the king and the good queen hear these doings!"

"Sh! sh! mother," whispered Mary, "lest we be overheard."

"I care not who hears."

"It may go worse with them."

"It can go no worse with them!" cried the indignant vrouw. "What can they do more, tell me? See ye the hole they have thrust them in! See the chains hanging on them, — and now thirsting for their blood! What can they do more, tell me?"

"Cry away, mother, loud as ye will; spit out your spleen; 't will give ye ease, if it helps not us," broke in Milborne, ironically. "'T is little enough his Majesty cares what we have suffered in the cause. Those rascals have his ear, and will stuff it with what lies they choose."

"Let them say what they like, brother Milborne, they dare not do anything," joined in Cobus, coming forward. "Warnings are pouring in from every quarter; a petition has been sent to the king. They dare not raise finger against ye."

Shaking his head and waving his hand with an air of lofty deprecation, Milborne answered : —

“ Seek not to unsettle our peace. Seek not to arouse vain hopes in us. Our minds are made up for the worst.”

“ Hush ! ”

“ Jacob ! ”

“ Be not so cast down, brother Milborne.”

“ Why cheat ourselves with hope ? ” he went on, ignoring the protesting trio. “ Did ye hear the news ? He has pardoned all others but us two, — ye know what that means.”

“ But the king,” urged Cobus ; “ they cannot move till word comes from his Majesty.”

“ The king will not interfere.”

A low wail broke from the women.

“ Blood must be shed to glut the thirst of these wolf-hounds. Vengeance demands a sacrifice ; we shall be the victims.”

“ That shall ye not ! ” burst out Cobus, with a touch of his father’s energy. “ Help is at hand. Our friends are rising all over the province. Woe to the man that lifts hand of violence against ye ! ”

“ Good, my son ! ” joined in his mother. “ We have friends enough ; they ’ll see no harm comes to ye.”

The sound of sliding bolts announced the jailor’s coming, and cut short the good dame’s eloquence. Instinctively she turned to her husband for protection.

“ Jacob, Jacob, my man, they ’ve come to drag me away from ye ! Jacob, I say, lift your eyes ; turn about and speak a word to me. Do ye hear ? One word for the sake of the old times.”

She gently pulled his head around and gazed anxiously in his face ; he stared at her stupidly.

"Father in heaven! Something is wrong with him. Look, Mary, at his eyes! He heeds nothing. Jacob, I say, look now,—look in my face! 'T is Elsie, your old Elsie! 'T was young Elsie years ago, when first I came to ye. Ye remember the day, Jacob, and how ye laughed that night,—our wedding night,—and joined the song, and said we'd be the happiest two in all Nieuw Amsterdam? Oh, well ye remember; often ye spoke of it since. See, here's the ring ye gave me. 'T is worn thin and small now with all the years. Ei! 't is long enough ago, but ye know best whether I have been true to it. Hard I tried, heart an' soul I did, to be a faithful wife to ye, Jacob, but— but"—tears choked her utterance—"I'm an old woman now, and ye heed me no more."

Aroused by this outburst, her husband put out his hand and softly caressed her head.

"Ye heed me no more," sobbed the dame.

"Ye have been a true wife, Elsie. Go home to your children."

"Oh, Jacob, how can I go leave ye in a place like this!"

"Go get ye home, and waste no thought on me."

"To leave ye in a dungeon, with fetters on ye!"

"'T is just."

"Ye shall not say it!"

"'T is right I should suffer for my sin."

"How could ye sin, being sent about the Lord's business?"

"No more o' that, woman!"

"Ei?"

"The Lord had no hand in it."

"No hand?"

"'T was my own vainglory."

"I'll not believe ye, — I'll not believe ye ever did wilful wrong!"

"God knows I did not, — stick ye to that. I was no rogue, but a fool. A fool does the greater harm, — 't is a deadly beast, not to be spared. Go get ye home to the children, and bid them forget me."

"Come, I say, get through with your whimpering. 'T is time ye were gone," broke in the impatient turn-key at the door.

But the dame, dismayed by her husband's tone of submission, a note which in all their long intercourse she had never before heard sounded, and which now jarred upon her ears like a painful discord, threw herself in a fresh outburst upon his neck, clinging there till Cobus with might and main dragged her from the cell.

On their way out, as they passed through the great gate of the fort, they met a party of gayly dressed horsemen about to enter. A stout, red-faced person, with an air of pomp and circumstance, who rode in advance, was laughing loudly.

"'T is the new governor," said Mary under her breath, skipping along to get out of the way.

Cobus, who had already recognized several well-known faces in the group, scowled darkly and stepped aside.

Vrouw Leisler, however, startled by Mary's warning, stood stock-still, and gazed hard at the advancing cavalcade. Thus she neglected to secure her escape from the narrow entrance, and was in consequence well-nigh trampled upon by his Excellency's prancing stallion.

Fresh from that sad scene in the dungeon, the poor dame could not restrain her wrath at sight of the rollicking party.

"Shame, shame on ye, cruel man!" she cried, boldly. "Ye have brought sorrow and suffering enough upon us, and now would ye make sport of our misery?"

His Excellency stared in amazement upon being thus taken to task, but at a hint from Bayard, who rode at his elbow, he quietly drew rein for the dame to pass, and went on his way without answer.

Slight as it was, the incident plainly caused the governor more than a passing discomfiture. Thus far the burden of the song which had reached his ears had been one of unmixed praise. By the common sort he had been hailed as a deliverer. By the long-oppressed body of the groote burgerrecht he had been well-nigh apotheosized. Brought back from exile, restored to their homes, families, and estates, and advanced to new honors, how could they do enough for the man by whose hands all this had been wrought!

A round of dinners, balls, and routs of very unusual splendor was set going, at which his Excellency was the chief and honored guest. It was, indeed, while returning early in the morning from a supper-party at Philipse's, where a dozen of them had literally made a night of it, that the self-complacent official had been so rudely accosted by Vrouw Leisler.

The young gentlemen in the governor's train spared not to make merry over the incident.

"What old vrouw was that?"

"The commander's wife."

"So?"

"Never!"

"What, great Cromwell's spouse?"

The laughing sceptics turned back to scan the retreating party.

"Governor, you are a naughty man."

"'Tis better your Excellency meet not the old dame alone."

"That is it. I noted her nails."

"And the vigor of her arm."

"And the mischief in her eye."

"Hear the wags prate, Van Cortlandt!" said the governor, good-naturedly, turning to his neighbor.

"And why not? 'Tis our turn to prate. The shoe is on the other foot now, eh, Bayard?"

"And they that wear it know how it pinches," added the colonel, bitterly. "Let it pinch. 'Tis well they should know the pang. Little enough any of their brood cared for my poor wife's misery, while I lay yonder in the self-same dungeon."

"Do they cry out already? Poh! they have had but a month of it yet, while we had a round dozen and more," put in Nichols.

"Yet lacked you one solace they enjoy," suggested a new voice.

"What is that, Graham?"

"You were not under sentence."

"No, but 't was worse with us; in a sentence there is some certainty."

"There should be," broke in Van Cortlandt, with a swift glance at the governor.

"Let us hope 't will prove so," added another, significantly.

"But we," continued Bayard, "were subject to the caprice of yonder beast, who was capable of striking off our heads at a moment's notice."

"His days of mischief would soon be ended now,

if his Excellency were of my mind," muttered Nichols.

"Or of mine."

"Patience, patience, gentlemen; be not so blood-thirsty," said his Excellency, laughing as he jumped from his horse at the door of the governor's house, and led the way to a small withdrawing-room adjoining the audience-chamber. There, no sooner had he seated himself and called for some wine than his companions settled about him like a swarm of flies, and directly the chorus was renewed.

"'Tis no laughing matter, your Excellency. If you knew but a tithe we have suffered from the wretch!"

"Ay, colonel, *you*, indeed, have some cause of complaint. Is everybody served? Gentlemen, here's your very good health!"

"And which of us has not, and of dread, too, while that viper breathes the air?"

"Poh, poh! What have you to dread now? Nothing! He is fast and safe. Come, my friends, fill up!"

"He is but scotched; he should be crushed."

"There'll be neither peace nor safety in the province till 'tis done."

"Every breath he draws is a menace to our lives and liberties."

"Know ye, too, that hordes of lawless, hulking rascals are scheming this very minute to compass his escape?"

"Eh? Think you there is any truth in that?" asked the governor, rather nervously.

"'Tis certain!"

"And if your Excellency move not in the matter soon —"

"Gentlemen, this talk is idle ; my authority in the matter is suspended ; they have appealed to the king."

A babel of protestation arose upon this.

"'Appealed!' What ground have condemned traitors of appeal?"

"They have no right of appeal beyond the governor and council."

"The governor stands here *in loco regis*."

"Was not your Excellency sent hither to compose differences and secure the peace of the province ; and is every little matter to be referred back to his Majesty?"

The governor looked harassed and uncertain.

"There may be reason in what you say, my friends. I will consider of it, and take the minds of my council in the matter."

Bayard and Van Cortlandt exchanged a grim smile.

"We have a meeting to-day on the question of my going up in person to Albany to make terms with the Mohawks."

"I trust you will not think of going away till this matter be settled."

"Van Cortlandt, I cry you mercy. Whatever I do, I will postpone further discussion of *this* matter for the present," retorted his Excellency, pettishly.

"Right! right! We have too much business!" cried one of the younger men. "What says your Excellency to a bit of sport to lighten these weighty affairs of state? Come, will you join us in running down a cunning old wolf that has been carrying off all the lambs in Ompoge?"

"When is it set for?"

"This very day."

"Egad, 't is a cruel temptation, but " — motioning with a rueful look towards the table before him, piled high with papers — "duty, you see, holds me here."

"You will not, however, fail us to-night?"

"To-night?"

"At the wedding."

"Ay, ay, surely. I'm pledged to that. To-night is it?"

"To-night; all our little world will be there."

"Count upon me. I will not fail."

The governor bowed his friends out, but did not stay to watch them across the green; else he might have wondered at their locked arms, their clustered heads, and frequent stops to parley.

The wedding proved a very grand affair. It has, indeed, become of historic interest, and that, too, without any great beauty or worth on the part of the wedded pair. The bride's father — whose name is withheld for sufficient reasons — was a rich mynheer of good old Dutch stock, a stanch member of the Stadthuys party, who had himself suffered in person and estate under Leisler's domination. This feast, then, to which were bidden all the men of weight and influence in the country-side, served the double purpose of reassembling the leaders of his own party in a general jubilation over the change in affairs, and incidentally doing honor to his daughter's nuptials. The governor, who had been the figure-head of the revolution, was naturally the guest of distinction.

Mynheer's house, if not the finest in the town, was yet worthy the company and the occasion, and a good example of the home of a rich burgher of the day. It

was a large, square, stone mansion on the corner of two considerable streets, with commodious offices, and a garden filled with choice Dutch plants stretching away to the rear. Somewhat bald without, it was luxurious enough within.

The heavy oak rafters which upheld the ceiling of the spacious drawing-room were carved in grotesque devices, and polished like a mirror. The walls, wainscoted in Spanish mahogany and hung with oil-paintings from the best Antwerp masters, abounded in nooks of mysterious gloom, defying the detective glare of a hundred candles. The floor was covered with a thick Flemish carpet. The high, carved mantelpiece, adorned with twisted pilasters and overhung by a flowered tabby cloth, was relieved below by a hearthstone, depicting in chocolate and blue tiles the pathetic story of Daniel in the lions' den.

The furniture was of a sort with the room. A tall clock in a carved oak case black with age stood in the corner. Velvet chairs hung with silver lace, others covered with leather and studded with brass nails, stood about. The massive sofa seemed poised upon the back of some monstrous beast crouched against the wall, whence his huge claw-feet protruded. Above gleamed a big, round mirror framed in ebony, and flanked by glittering silver sconces ablaze with wax-lights. On the marble table stood tall candelabra, also bristling with lighted candles. Flowered tabby curtains draped the windows, and the broad window-seats were furnished with feathered cushions covered in tapestry-work. Upon the narrow chimney-shelf stood an hour-glass, and the family Bible with polished brass ends and clasps. Above hung the sword used by the host's father in the English wars.

In the near corner leaned a burnished warming-pan, and on the opposite side was a spinning-wheel with cunningly inlaid frame.

In the dining-room, what with the precious accumulation of years of smoke from roaring logs on the hearth and the flaring of innumerable candles, the dusky walls and ceilings recalled the witching sombreness of certain Dutch masterpieces. The heavy mahogany table, dimmed by years of service, mirrored with a ghostly gleam the massive silver service which glittered on its surface. The carving of the huge sideboard was lost in gloom, but the rich store of glasses, flacons, and decanters with which it was loaded caught and reflected in a dazzling way the glow of the fire and candles.

Punctuality had not yet fallen from its high estate as a virtue, so that before the last peal of the sunset bell from the fort had died away the whole company was assembled.

And where upon the round earth could a more sober, respectable, and decorous-looking company have been called together? What it wanted in brilliance it made up in dignity; what in grace, was amply supplied in splendor. In outward aspect, indeed, it fell little short of gorgeousness. The women were loaded with heavy rings and chains of gold; they sported lace of Flemish and Venetian point. Their silken petticoats, of which each wore as many as she could carry, quilted with endless toil in a hundred fantastic patterns, were marvels of handiwork. Stockings curiously clocked, jewelled shoe-buckles, and heavy purses wrought in filigree made up an attire not conspicuous for simplicity.

Neither was the garb of the men, grave and sedate

as they looked, behindhand in point of finery, nor, it must be confessed, in point of clumsiness. The number of Mynheer's breeches equalled that of his vrouw's petticoats, — the outer pair, made of silk or velvet, being overhung by the long lappets of a waistcoat wrought in gold. Covering all was a voluminous coat with buckram-stiffened skirts sweeping to his very ankles. The host, as he stood beside his bobbing vrouw, near the open door, to receive his guests, protected his bald head from the draught by a cap of yellow brocade, with a crimson-velvet brim turned up to the crown.

Amidst all this splendor there was one object of elegance; it was the begum. Her flowing robe of creamy cashmere was superbly wrought in colors. A fillet of diamonds shone in her coarse, black hair and secured her head-gear, — a long veil of sheerest muslin hemmed with gold thread, — which was drawn at will about her slender person, or tossed hither and thither by her restless hands.

Steenie, coming upon the little woman in the throng, for the first time in his life became vaguely aware of this air of distinction. He stopped to talk, and — was it his own ripened taste, or that he now heeded it as never before? — he found her conversation so abounding in a piquant flavor that he took no pains to conceal his look of annoyance when somebody came to interrupt them.

Thereafter, wandering listlessly through the rooms, his eye was caught by a chattering group gathered about one of the window-seats. He drew near, and found Catalina the centre of it. By a happy audacity her mother had dressed her in scarlet, and she formed the high-light of a striking picture.

Stopping merely to look, he unconsciously listened. Catalina was the speaker. With gay looks and tripping accent she was rehearsing some cabalistic rhyme, to determine which of the group should next fill the place of bride and groom. One after another, with much good-natured banter, slipped into place before her to undergo the test.

A whim seized the junker; watching his chance, without leave or warning he stepped into the vacant place. The speaker was hopelessly discomfited. Controlling an impulse to cry out, she stared at him a moment, and dropped her eyes. Her companions clamored noisily for her to go on. She flushed painfully and stammered. The momentary silence was broken by a rumor that the bride had appeared.

Directly the others flew away, like a flock of birds, leaving Steenie and Catalina alone.

"See," he began, holding to his purpose, "here is my hand. I am waiting to try my luck."

The timely diversion had given the rhymster a moment's relief. With ill-assumed indifference she took his hand, steadied herself, and looked up in his face to begin.

Nothing surely could have been more amiable than the junker's expectant look. But she, suspecting perhaps a lurking mockery behind that demure mask, suddenly dropped his hand, and hurried away after her companions.

Directly the marriage ceremony was over, the bride fell from her rank as a person of consequence. She was left to the younger fry, who repaired to a room apart, where they danced and sported after time-honored fashion.

With the rest of the company the governor was the

hero of the hour. All pressed forward for a presentation. His Excellency was most obliging. He stood flushed and perspiring in his scarlet toggery, shaking hands and bowing acknowledgment of the compliments poured in upon him.

Happily he was soon relieved; supper was announced, and he was led away by his host to the seat of honor at the board. Every delicacy which the peopled woods or teeming waters could afford loaded the table. The choicest fruit of Spanish and Portuguese vineyards was not wanting, while all was supplemented by divers toothsome kickshaws of the huysvrouw's art.

Such heavy viands called for huge draughts to wash them down. His Excellency, well known as a good trencherman, proved that he was no laggard at the bowl. Willing hands were not lacking to see that his cup was filled, nor ready wits to furnish occasion for new bumpers to his honor and success.

"Here's to our new governor," began an over-zealous young man, sitting below the little group gathered at the head of the table.

"Nay, nay, spare me; 't is growing stale, that toast. It has been drunk a half-score times already," pleaded his Excellency, laughing.

"Very good," returned the pledger, with a wink at those about him, "I will ring a change upon it. How is this? Here's to our new broom; may it make a clean sweep, and leave no dust in the corners!"

A buzz of approbation ran round the table.

"I accept the amendment, my good friend," answered the governor, in a voice already somewhat thick, "though I must say 't is something of a riddle, that toast of yours."

"Let me resolve it for your Excellency by another," said a voice nearer at hand. "Gentlemen, are you ready? Well, then! Here's to the Theseus sent to cope with our Minotaur; may he prove that the race of heroes is not run out!"

An uproar of applause greeted this sentiment, what with the stamping of feet, the rattling of knives and spoons, mingled with hoarse shouts of delight.

"After hunting tigers in Bengal, I might make shift to engage the monster," said his Excellency, with growing unsteadiness of utterance; "but remember the beast was inclosed in a labyrinth, and I—I have no skill in labyrinths."

"The way is straight," said a low voice in his ear.

"And there are willing guides," added one, in a stage whisper from across the table.

"Fie, fie, gentlemen!" cried his Excellency, with a nervous laugh; "remember the occasion; 't is a feast we are at. No business, I pray you. See, you are driving away the ladies!"

The remark was occasioned by Madam Van Cortlandt, who, summoning the reluctant Steenie to escort her, was saying good-night at the door. Other guests were going; it was getting late. One little group, however, still lingered about the fireside, listening to the begum's account of similar festivities in her native land.

Having sent Catalina home in her palanquin, that lady was professedly killing time till its return. Notwithstanding her listeners' keen interest in what she was saying, the lady talked in a very odd and absent manner. Perhaps the convivial party at the other end of the room disconcerted her, for at every move-

ment in their circle she hesitated, looked uneasy, and cast a furtive glance in that direction. Suddenly she stopped in the very midst of a sentence, and forgetting her staring audience, she listened heart and soul to what his Excellency was saying.

"Ah, my friends, what a curry Colonel Bob could make! 'T would keep a fish in the sea thirsty; I swear to you a man could drink all night after it, and begin again in the morning. Egad, I'd give half my income for a dish of it this minute, if I might ever meet another with the trick of making it."

To the great surprise of her auditors, the begum advanced quickly, and leaning over the table, said,—

"Gentlemen—your pardon!"

"Madam, your most humble servant," answered the governor, struggling to his feet.

"I hear,"—the lady's tone showed, as it seemed, undue agitation,— "it comes to my ear, your Excellency's wish. 'T is a secret I learned in my own country, the dish you talk of—I know it well, and if I can serve you—"

"Nay, Madam, 't was a passing whim. I could never put you to such trouble."

"I shall count it an honor. Sir, I beg you!"

"Gentlemen, you hear,— what can I say?"

"Your Excellency, such an offer is not to be slighted."

"Madam, I am but mortal. Hark ye, gentlemen, a toast; and let it be a bumper. Here's health and gratitude to her Mightiness the Begum!"

The lady acknowledged the compliment with a profound obeisance. Then turning briskly to the fulfilment of her promise, she sent to the kitchen for a chafing-dish and ingredients, dispatched a slave to her

own house for the rarer condiments, and in an incredibly short time the savory dish was smoking upon the board.

A murmur of thanks, another toast, another salaam, and the agitated cook withdrew to join the ladies in the drawing-room.

Whether the dish proved too fiery for the untutored palates of the Dutchmen, whether from forbearance or some unexplained reason, the lion's share was served to his Excellency, who scrupled not to accept it. His account of its effects, moreover, was abundantly verified. Relay after relay of wine, fetched from the well-stocked bins beneath, failed to cool the burning throats. In due time a huge bowl of punch took the place of the bottles. Thereupon the merriment grew boisterous. Indiscriminate applause greeted alike the well-turned song, the stupid jest, or salacious tale, — the ladies were at a safe distance.

The ladies, indeed, were, for the most part, gone. In the drawing-room the patient hostess still nodded in the midst of a few heavy-eyed dames, who, kept by the storm, waited for their carousing lords.

For the storm, long threatening, had broken at last, and in ill-lighted, unpaved streets was not to be lightly encountered. The begum's palanquin-bearers, driven in by the pelting rain, lay crouched like sleeping dogs upon a rug in a dark corner of the hall. Their mistress, unconscious of their presence, paced the drawing-room with cat-like tread and ear intent upon the progressing orgies.

After a lull which sadly tried the patience of the listener, his Excellency was heard, more inarticulate than ever, in converse with another, whose tones were clear, insinuating, and urgent.

"But I pray your Excellency to consider; you are among friends here."

"Fr-frien's! yesh, go-ood frien's!"

"Good friends, very true. Now among good friends one may talk his mind."

"Ay, ay, talk away, go-ood frien'; but your glash is empty — see!"

"Listen; this is business. Your Excellency is looking for a home. Now, there is a fine plantation on the river wants an owner."

"Eh?"

"An estate for a duke, well watered, timbered, stocked with cattle and slaves."

"So — hic-o?"

"There is no better estate in the province."

"Go-ood!"

"A word in your ear; the day this matter is settled —"

His Excellency's blurred vision clearly failed to catch the wink.

"Umph?"

"— that estate finds an owner—"

Was the fuddled official past taking a hint?

"— and your Excellency — ahem —"

"Eh?"

"— finds a home."

Has some savor of the insinuation at last reached him through the clogged avenues of sense? He shifts uneasily in his chair, and as his eye lights upon two of the party withdrawn to whisper in the corner, he hails it as a distraction, and loudly rallies them: —

"Hello! Hel-lo, I say! See yon sneaks! Go fetch 'm back, 'n' fill their gl-lashes!"

"But your Excellency —"

"Fetch 'em back! F-fetch 'em back, I say, and make 'em dr-rink! We'll have no sn-neaks here!"

"Make good your promise to us, your Excellency, and we'll drink you measure for measure till the cock crows."

"Drink — dr-rink, I say, and I'll make good anything!"

"Here, then, if it please you, 'tis but to sign this paper."

"F-faugh! T-take it away. Leaving si-ignin' papers till the day. Dr-rink, I say!"

"So we will; but first — 'tis but to write your name."

A place was cleared upon the table, the parchment was spread before him, a half-dozen of the most noted men of the province crowded around.

"Pray you, sir!"

"A stroke of the pen and 't is done."

"See, here is the place."

"To-morrow 't will be as hard to do."

"'T is the sentence of the court."

"'T is approved by the council."

"And confirmed by the assembly."

"Would you free the land from rebels and traitors?"

"Indeed, you have no choice."

"Come, sir, the punch is waiting."

"See, here is the place."

A pen was fitted to the unsteady fingers, the paper was adjusted. A tense silence fell upon the room, broken only by the roaring of the wind in the huge chimney and the raging of the storm without. The candles burned low in their sockets; a fitful flame



"He scrawled the fatal lines."

flickered among the wasted logs upon the hearth-stone. Out of the shadows of the doorway close at hand peered a dusky face, with glaring eyes fixed upon the little group.

“Wh-wha’ zis *for*, gen-gen’lemen?”

The thick tongue could scarcely articulate, and the heavy lids drooped over the vacant eyes.

“For his Majesty’s glory and the peace of the province.”

“He-here’s to ’s Ma-majesty’s gl-glory!”

He scrawled the fateful lines, the pen dropped from his nerveless grasp, and he rolled, a senseless clod, under the table.

XXVI.

ALL through the night the storm raged on, and the morning brought no change save the glimmering of a cold, gray light sifted through countless strata of icy vapor. From the exhaustless reservoir of the northern seas came sweeping, in endless succession, vast masses of clouds, to pour out their floods upon the drenched city.

Round about the little island the storm marshalled its forces as an enemy about a beleaguered camp. The sea thundered upon the rocks; the Kolch, risen high in its basin, threatened overflow; the brook leaped its bounds, and swept in mad turbulence down the Magde Paetje; while far and near the ground was strewn with dead branches of trees and rotten saplings wrenched from the dismantled palisades.

Within the walls the gutters ran in rivulets; the shattered bark eaves-troughs spurted cascades from every corner; mimic lakes formed in each hollow of the ground, and the unpaved streets were an ooze of mud.

The fort, perched on its little promontory, suffered the full fury of the attack: loose mortar and bits of rubble from the walls were flung hither and yonder; streams of water poured over the bastions; the wind, swooping among the enclosed buildings, tore shingles from the roofs, rocked the old bell-tower from base to summit, dashed in shrieks of ill-omen against the barred windows of the dungeon, howled down the

chimney of the governor's house, sending out thick clouds of smoke from the struggling fire into the low-ceiled room where sat some members of the council, shuddering amidst their whispered conference at the fury of the blast, which, shrieking, demon-voiced, at the casement, sped away to blab abroad the dark secret it had eavesdropped.

Catalina stood at the window of her own room, looking out upon the storm. Over the tree-tops in the garden she caught a glimpse of the sea gleaming with white-caps, the further shore blurred out by clouds and rain.

Despite the dreariness of the outlook, the young girl lingered long at her post, and shivered as she turned away; for within things were at their worst. The whole house was torn up and disordered in preparation for moving, — her father, having resolved, since the change in affairs, to quit the town and retire to his farm in Nieuw Utrecht.

Shut up in his herbarium brooding over the results of the late revolution, the doctor concerned not himself with details; the begum had a native scorn for any menial task, and thus the work of packing was left to the slaves, with the natural result.

Notwithstanding the turmoil and the swarming humanity, Catalina was conscious of a sense of isolation and mystery. The house held not a companion for her. The children were at play in the garret; the slaves at their work; her father shut up as described; while her mother, preoccupied and anxious, spent the day wandering restlessly from room to room, peering from the windows, listening breathlessly as if for some expected sound to break through the dull roar of wind and rain.

Impatient of the stress of influences not to be seen or understood, Catalina, at last, with an impetuous movement, started to go to her father's room. Though silent, he was not unkind, and though he might not welcome, he would not repulse her. She could at least sit quietly and look at his big musty books filled with odd cuts of plants and flowers, and forget all malign influences in his protective presence.

Down the broad staircase and through the hall, cluttered with furniture and packing-cases, she passed, reaching at length the narrow passage which led to her father's room.

The sight of the door ajar and the sound of conversation from within caused her to stop. Her father was speaking in a tone of strong excitement.

"What do you tell me, woman?"

Could this be to her mother? Never had she heard her addressed in such wise.

"'T is done, I say. I saw him sign the paper."

"They dare not!"

"'T is the sentence of the court."

"A court packed with his enemies."

"The council, the assembly, approve it."

"And who be they?—the selfsame blood-hungry brood."

"The whole country cries out for it. He is a monster, — a beast of carnage that must be hunted down and —"

The speaker, at a loss for a word strong enough to express her meaning, finished the sentence with a stamp of her foot.

"'T will be a murder!"

"It will be to take away a dread and a burden

from the people. It will be to bless the province. It will be to let honest people breathe in peace, sleep without horrid dreams, speak like men and women, and not slaves."

"I tell you, woman, that day Jacob Leisler dies by the hangman's hand will be the darkest ever dawned upon this land."

"Be it dark or light," came the retort in a tone almost fierce with exultation, "'t will dawn with to-morrow's sun."

Catalina heard these concluding words, saw the door open, saw her mother's form advancing towards her in the passage, but she stood motionless. So gradually had the intelligence grown in her mind from a premonition to a dark suspicion, to a sinking fear, to a horrible conviction, that she did not start or tremble; she simply stood as if the blood had stopped coursing in her veins.

It was her mother who brought her back to a realization of the truth.

"Child, what have you heard?"

Catalina scarcely felt the grasp upon her arm, heeded not the question; she had but one thought.

Shaking off her mother's hold, she flew through the hall, opened the door, — entreaties, warnings, threats, unheard, — and dashed away through the pelting storm, hoodless and cloakless.

The day was spent. Night was fast falling. It was simply a change from gray to black. Light or darkness, it was all the same to Catalina; she could have found her way in sleep to that familiar stoop in the Strand. The slave who opened the door was almost startled into dropping her candle, as the

bedraggled little figure sprang in out of the swirl of wind and rain, and darted past her up the stairs.

Hester stood before the mirror smoothing her hair. She looked up tranquilly as the door was flung open, shaded her eyes from the glare of the candle, and stared with quiet curiosity on recognizing her visitor at such an hour and in such a guise.

That undisturbed look struck the visitor dumb. She stood rooted to the threshold, with not a word to say.

"Catalina, what brings *you*?"

The girl tried to speak; her lips quivered, her face was contorted, but unable to fetch forth a word she threw herself into her friend's arms with a troubled cry.

In vain Hester asked what it all meant. She could only get sobs and inarticulate cries in answer. She made matters worse by offering general condolence upon any or all ills her visitor might be afflicted with.

Her entreaties were interrupted by a loud wail from below, followed by groans and despairing cries. In dismay Hester hurried downstairs, Catalina vainly striving to withhold her.

She found the cosey supper-room warmed and lighted, and the table spread for their evening meal; but, as if in mockery of all these preparations for creature comfort, there, upon the hearth-rug, stood their old pastor, his wide-brimmed hat and cloak fallen in a sodden mass to the floor, supporting in his arms her mother, who, in an utter abandonment of grief, filled the air with groans. Before him, upon the floor, Mary sobbed without restraint; in the hall Cobus strode up and down in violent agitation; while

from the kitchen doorway peered the frightened faces of a group of slaves.

Hester stood in silence, yielding to the creeping chill of coming terror. Before the question that trembled upon her lips could be put into words the need for it was gone.

"Let us pray."

All heeded the dominie's call save Cobus, who kept on his restless march.

The prayer left no more questions to be asked. Hester rose from her knees with face ashen and fixed. She shed no tears, uttered no sound of grief. She sat in a chair for a space, and then went and asked the dominie if they might go to the fort.

"Yes, yes, go, all of you. Take the mother. The time is short."

Seeing herself forgotten, Catalina stole away. Coming out upon the stoop, she found a tall figure standing in the darkness. She was about to pass, when a well-known voice said, "You have seen her?"

"Yes; oh, go in, — go you and speak to her. She will listen to you."

Quite unconsciously she caught the junker's arm and peered beseechingly in his face. He did not heed her clutch, he could not see her pleading eyes; he was busy with some scruples of his own.

"You will go?"

"I will wait for the dominie."

Dimly guessing at his meaning, she turned away. A passing lantern showed her scanty dress. He quietly stripped off his great-coat and threw it over her. Failing for the first time in her life to resent such a liberty, she went submissively away, trailing the heavy garment through the mud.

The junker remained at his post, pacing up and down in the rain. Drenched, muffled figures slipped past him into the house, amongst them Dr. Staats with lantern and a cloak, in search of his daughter. Others, friends and relatives, arrived; the dreadful news was spreading. A score of persons, all told, might have gathered. The sound of lamentation mingled with curses and execrations gradually increased to an uproar. Thereupon, dominating the tumult, the voice of the dominie once more uprose in supplication. Directly his prayer was ended, a silent procession filed out of the door and took its way towards the fort.

Which of all these cloaked and hooded figures was she? The junker stood looking after them, in doubt whether to follow, when the dominie stepped up to him.

“Come with me! I have work for you.”

Without question or hesitation the summons was obeyed.

“This is a woful business,” said the good man, as they hurried along; “it crushes these poor people. I pity them; but God looks on, ’tis all done in his providence. We cannot stay the course of justice. ’Tis best we should not. ’Tis best for the people, best for the country, that this thing should be done, — I may speak freely to you, — but some part of these cruel practices may be dispensed with. Let the man pay the penalty of his great sin with his life; all beyond is barbarity. Let us make haste and see if we may get these cruelties abated.”

“Is it needful for that to see his Excellency?”

“Yes; he alone has power to remit any part of the sentence.”

"I hope he may be found," said Steenie, significantly.

But the storm drowned his voice, and the unsuspecting dominie plunged on towards Colonel Bayard's house, where the governor lodged. Arrived, they were told his Excellency was not at home.

"Where is he?" demanded the dominie, sharply.

The servant knew nothing about it.

"Go tell your master Dominie Selyns waits to see him!"

But the colonel was absent also, and nothing was known of his whereabouts.

The dominie uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"Leave it to me," said Steenie, quickly.

"There must be no miscarriage in the matter," was the stern warning.

"If it be in the power of man to do, I will do it," said the junker, resolutely.

The dominie still hesitated.

"You are needed yonder," pointing towards the fort.

"True, true; go, my lad,—go and do your best. The business is safer in your hands than in mine," he added, perhaps with a recollection of the junker's kinship with many of the party in power.

The two parted on the dark stoop, and went their separate ways.

Whether acting upon information or surmise, Steenie decided at once upon his course, and lost no time in setting off on his errand. Going home, he told nobody of his purpose, but stole to the stables, saddled his own horse, and unaccompanied by servant or slave made his way to the Landpoort and galloped off through the darkness.

Like all youths of the day, he was a skilled horseman and quite familiar with the few highways traversing the island.

Pushing on as fast as the storm and darkness would permit, he saw presently, to the right of the road, a feeble gleam of light. He remembered his whereabouts. Thinking perhaps of his dripping state and the long ride before him, he dashed up to the house and pounded on the door with his whip. It was opened directly, and Tryntje appeared.

“Quick, huysvrouw, a glass of brande-wyn!”

Without pause or question the little woman darted away, and presently appeared with a bottle and mug, — the owner of the bottle, aroused from his fireside nap, bringing up the rear.

“What happens, Mynheer?” he asked, stifling a yawn.

The junker told the news in a word as he wheeled his horse.

“God help us all!”

“The great captain himself! Ach, if he had but minded me when I —”

Heedless of the consternation of the worthy pair, Steenie galloped off in the midst of their exclamations, and for several hours, without pause or interruption, held his course.

It was past midnight when at last he drew up before a dark mass of buildings and shrubbery which presently proved a mansion of unusual extent, as the broken line of its wings and offices stood out in gray relief against the black background of the forest.

Driving into the stable-yard, where he was greeted by a chorus of barking dogs, the rider gave over his

jaded horse to a sleepy groom and made all haste to the house.

Here tell-tale rays of light seen through chinks and cracks in the closed shutters, together with a murmur of voices and an occasional burst of laughter from within, told of a convivial party.

Sounding the knocker and making known his name, Steenie was ushered directly to the supper-room, where his appearance was the signal for a noisy greeting.

As the junker stood for a moment upon the threshold, there took place divers swift and marked contractions of his facial muscles. Before him was reproduced the scene of the wedding-feast; the disordered table, the selfsame company, with his Excellency in the seat of honor proposing, in a voice reminiscent of yesterday, a toast in his honor.

Notwithstanding this cordial reception, Steenie failed not to detect certain keen and critical glances bent upon him. There was need of caution; there was need of presence of mind. An ill-judged move might defeat his purpose. He studied the group with anxiety as he set down his cup; he noted the condition of his Excellency; clearly, no time was to be lost.

Meantime the flow of conviviality was checked. Naturally the company looked to him for an explanation of his unbidden entrance to the revel. The junker hesitated; he floundered for a moment in embarrassment. Presently he drew himself up. His face cleared.

"Gentlemen, I am come here on an errand of mercy."

There was an indefinable movement among his hearers.

"I am come hither on the part of the dominie to

beg that no needless cruelty be practised on yonder wretches."

A murmur, which, though inarticulate, was as distinctly hostile as the growl of a wild beast, went around the board.

"May it please your Excellency," went on the junker without giving time for an interruption, "I appeal to you to remit so much of this sentence as goes beyond —"

"No more o' that bus-business! 'T is settled, — I'll not be plagued with it again. Come, gentlemen, where are your glasses?"

"But please your Excellency, if the ends of justice are answered by the death of the culprits, anything further —"

"No more, I say!" interrupted the governor, angrily. "My go-ood friend, let the old dominie do his own preaching, and fill you up your gl-lass like your father's son!"

Silenced by the loud applause which greeted this answer, Steenie looked about with an air of discouragement. Well he knew his listeners; small sympathy they would have at any time for mere sentiment; but in this instance he came to plead for one at whose hands they had suffered every form of indignity, till the very thought of him filled them with a blighting hatred.

As if recognizing in the occasion a crucial test of character, the junker summoned every resource of manhood to the fore.

"Gentlemen, you are advisers to his Excellency; I appeal to you. Shall we go back to savage practices? This is a remnant of barbarism; 'tis a disgrace to Christianity; will you suffer it?"

There was a dead silence.

Driven to straits, the petitioner next called on individuals by name to aid him in persuading his Excellency; in each case he was met by a blank refusal.

"D-damn me if I'll be persua-suaded by the best of you!" hiccoughed his Excellency. "I'd have you to know I've a m-mind o' my own. C-come, no more o' this! Fill up, gentlemen!"

Straightway there was a prodigious bustle in opening bottles and filling glasses. The junker was ignored.

But only for a minute. With a supreme effort he met the crisis.

"Listen!" he cried, as he struck the table a resounding thump. "Listen, I say, one and all! Grant me now and here this thing I ask, or by the goodness of God I will make known to the world how yonder wretch's death was compassed!"

There was an instant commotion. The governor staggered to his feet, purple with wrath.

"Does he th-think to bully us? S-seize him? Seize him!"

Several members of the startled circle expostulated with his Excellency, others came with overtures to Steenie.

"Stand off! I will have no parleying. There is no time to waste. Once for all," he cried, turning and stalking to the door, "shall I have what I ask?"

There was a whispered consultation, accompanied by many oaths and much angry gesticulation. At last one of the elders of the party wrote a few hurried lines on a slip of paper, which his Excellency signed with a tipsy scrawl and flung to the floor. Verifying the paper with one sweeping glance as he picked it up, the waiting junker was away without a word.

On the way back, what with his breathless pace and the heavy roads, his horse foundered. There was no help at hand. There was no time for consideration. Turning the poor beast loose upon the highway, therefore, he pushed on afoot, and arrived, travel-worn and exhausted, at the Landpoort as the gates were opening.

The night had gone, and left a dark legacy of storm and tragedy to the infant day. About the entrance of the fort a restless crowd was already gathered. What had brought them? What was doing? Was he too late?

Filled with forebodings, the junker pushed his way through to the gate, explained his business to the sentry, and after much delay was admitted.

Within, a squadron of troops drawn up before the governor's house shocked him by its grim significance. Pausing not to see or hear, however, he made his way with all speed to the dungeon in search of the dominie. In the narrow corridor, posted about the door of the cell, stood on guard another detachment of troopers.

His name, muttered to the officer, was heard within, and caused a sensation,—his errand being well-known. Shrinking from entering, he demanded only to see the dominie, but was pushed across the threshold by the officious soldiers.

In his heated state the dungeon chilled him to the marrow; coming straight from the light, he could see nothing in the gloom but detached, haggard faces, with eyes hungering for a word of hope. He stood like one in a nightmare till the dominie reached his side.

“What luck?”

"'T is granted."

"God be praised!"

The fervent words were misconstrued. A false hope leaped up in the hearts of those who overheard. Milborne was one of them; Steenie shuddered to see the despair of the unhappy wretch when the dominie mercifully corrected the mistake.

"Go back to him, then! Go to him again! Go, some one, tell him the king—his Majesty has pardoned us! The reprieve is on the way—'tis the storm keeps back the ship! Go bid him wait—wait for the storm to clear! Go *you*, dominie; they will hearken to you! Tell him God will avenge the death of innocent men! Go! time is flying. Waste no more breath in prayer. Go threaten them with the thunderbolts of heaven, with earthquake, pestilence, and famine!—go call down upon them the curses of the Almighty, if they persist in this wickedness! Will nobody listen—will nobody heed? Have ye no pity—no mercy? Van Cortlandt, go you, I say, and tell his Excellency we will humble ourselves—we will confess our guilt—we will bind ourselves with pledges—we will submit to any penalty; go! go while there is time! If you ever hope for mercy, go! Go, as you look for redemption in Christ! Quick! Haste! Speak them soft—speak them fair! Tell those honorable councillors and the worshipful governor we are two poor, miserable, contrite wretches, worn out in body and sick at heart, who have few days at best to live. Beg them!—implore them to save us from this! Oh!—oh-h-h! Will nobody listen—will nobody heed me? Cobus! Jacobse, I say, Gouveneur—Walters, heed me! Give over whining and prayer! Out! Out with ye into the

streets! Rouse the town! Call out our friends—bid them save us from these bloody tyrants! They are but a handful, they will run like sheep! Away with ye! Go while there's time! ye may save us yet. Do ye hear? Cowards, will ye stand by and see us dragged to slaughter like beasts? Oh—oh-h-h, Father in heaven—dear God, merciful God, will ye hear? Almighty God, will ye heed? Save—*save*—*SAVE US!*”

The frantic appeals of the unhappy man were interrupted by a movement at the door. An officer stepped forward and said gruffly,—

“Let the prisoners make ready to go!”

Whether finding a calm in uttermost despair, whether paralyzed by the forerunning breath of the impending blow, Milborne straightway ceased. Not another word escaped him.

Crowded back against the wall by the advancing guard, Steenie saw before him as in a picture the cell and its inmates. There was a movement in the corner; Leisler had risen from his bench and stood where the light of the narrow window fell full upon him.

The junker stared in amazement at the transfiguration wrought in him: shaven, combed, and dressed, his person had an air of decency which even in the heyday of his power it had lacked; his rugged features, softened by a look of resignation, showed yet a certain loftiness in their serenity. The strong plebeian expression which had so marked his whole personality seemed to have been fused away, leaving something akin to the sublimated look of martyrdom.

He began to speak, and directly there was a hush in the room.

“Good-by, dominie. So! ye scorn not to take the

hand of a felon? Ye have behaved to me ever like a true Christian; I deserved it not from ye. I am sorry now for the ill-treatment ye had at my hands. I misjudged ye as I did others.

“Of you and all I have injured I humbly beg pardon, as here a dying sinner before God and the world I declare my own forgiveness of the most bitter of my enemies. More,—I make it my last prayer to kith and kin that they be forgetful of any wrong done me. ’Tis your holy office, dominie, to bear testimony of the truth; make clear, then, to the people the mind I die in of true repentance and forgiveness. Touching this matter I am condemned for, I declare as my dying word it was my only object to serve the interests of our sovereign lord and lady and the Protestant Reformed Church. Say this for the truth’s sake, when ye hear me maligned!

“Ei, children! Are ye all here? — Mary, Hester, Cobus! Good-by to ye! — nay, dry your eyes! I am not one to weep for; my going is no loss to ye, but a gain. Forgive me, my children, the shame I brought upon ye; ’tis a blot will wash out in time. Take ye good care o’ my old Elsie, — she has been a faithful mother to ye. God sends ye not many such friends in life!

“Elsie,” — he paused, shaken by a passing tremor as he lifted his wife’s half-senseless form and strove to look on her face, — “what can I say to ye, wife? I have slighted ye and your faithful heart’s service. I held it too cheap because I knew it sure. I had been better off to have minded your counsel, but I was a fool in my pride. Can ye forgive me? I know ye can! I know ye will! Ye need not open your lips, I see it in your eyes. ’T was God joined ye to

me for better and for worse ; he parts us now in his own great wisdom and goodness. Good-by — good-by. D' ye hear me, wife ? May God in his mercy — there — there, take her — take her away ! ”

Nothing but force availed to tear the faithful vrouw from her husband's arms. Steenie shut his eyes that he might not see the poor despairing creature as she was dragged past him out of the cell.

The next moment a movement in the doorway drew his attention ; Hester was coming out with the rest. She looked him in the face without a sign of recognition ; her eyes were as glassy and staring as a doll's.

With an instinctive movement he sprang forward, as if expecting her to fall ; she passed on like a sleep-walker, unheeding his presence. He walked by her side along the corridor and up the steep steps to the outer air, but for all she knew he might have been a thousand miles away.

Half-way to the gate they were stopped by the guard. No reason was given for the detention, they asked none ; they dumbly stood and waited, like cattle.

The silence was suddenly broken by a sound which filled the air above them and shook the earth beneath ; the bell in the tower began to toll. With a humane instinct Steenie quickly seized Hester by the shoulders and turned her away.

There was a stir behind them, — the procession had begun to move. In the midst of a hollow square formed by the troops the culprits walked. The dull thuds of a muffled drum regulated their step through the mud ; they were bound and bareheaded ; the rain dashed in blinding torrents in their faces, while

above, like an awful metronome, the bell beat the time for their funeral march.

N-n-n-g! N-n-n-g!

At the gate they are stopped; there is a disturbance. A little woman breaks through the file of soldiers and stretches forth a bottle to the commander.

"Take it! 't is good brande-wyn, 't will bear ye up. The cold and rain will kill ye else, — take but a sip!"

From his upper air the commander looked down upon her as upon an insect wriggling in the pathway, with no sense of her meaning.

Before she could repeat her offer the little huysvrouw was roughly thrust back by the soldiers.

N-n-n-g! N-n-n-g!

The merciless bell drives them on. The waiting multitude outside the gate, hungering for the ghastly spectacle, feed fat their eyes upon it as they surround and hem it in and bear it away through the Landpoort, as a monster that has seized its prey.

Homeward faring, the mourners go their different way, marking with shuffling feet the adagio measure beaten by the pursuing metronome.

N-n-n-g! N-n-n-g!

Every blow crushes in upon their hearts, yet its dying vibrations leave them in dread suspense lest it come not again.

But the fear is vain. It comes again and ever again. It tolls on through ages of suffering before they reach the house.

Assembled on the stoop, they turn to go in. Again it comes with warning peal.

N-n-n-g! N-n-n-g!

"There — there 't is! I feared 't was the last.

My Jacob! my husband! Father in heaven, there is time to save him — he lives and breathes yet!”

“Come, mother, — come in from the storm.”

“Go! — go leave me here! I’ll pray while I have breath. There! there again! he lives, I say, he thinks of us. God will hear me, — he’ll put a stop to this. There! — ’t is louder, that — ”

Unable to bear this longer, Steenie turned to go. He looked wistfully at the figure by his side. He made a move to speak, but the sight of the doll’s eyes restrained him.

At the bottom of the steps he stopped and turned. They were bearing the distracted mourner in; the others followed, and the door closed behind them.

Turning to the left, the junker sauntered toward the Waterpoort, mindless of the storm which momentarily increased. At the gate he paused, hesitating which way to go; suddenly he became conscious that the bell had ceased to toll.

With a shudder he turned around and hurried home.

XXVII.

VROUW LYSBETH WICKOFF was, in her own way, as interesting as her cousin, Madame Van Cortlandt, although, being but a farmer's wife, she lacked something of the grand air of her kinswoman. Let it not be thought, however, that the good widow was wanting in presence. Credible tradition represents her as of a strictly imposing personality ; her ample figure, aside from the impressiveness which belongs to mere area-displacement, had a suggestion of seasoned energy ; her rounded shoulders, of fardels borne ; her big seamed hands, of the plough-handle, which at need she had not shrunk from gripping, and of the lesser mattock ; while her shrewd, resolute face, with its ingrained weather-worn bloom, was saved from hardness by touches of womanly sympathy and mother-kindliness.

If these various marks of individuality be thought insufficient to justify her high standing as a leader in the little village of Vlacktebos, where she lived, let it be added that Vrouw Wickoff was mistress of a comfortable estate, comprising a snug homestead and a large farm under good cultivation.

That Dame Lysbeth dwelt alone was no fault of her own ; for her husband had died in the course of nature, and of her two children, Grietje, her daughter, had married a young minister, whom the *Clas-sis* had recently called back to Amsterdam, while Marten, her son, had gone to be a sea-captain in

command of a goodly bark which his fond mother had built for him with her own dowry increased by years of hoardings.

But the widow did not suffer herself to mope under this desertion of kith and kin. There was in her none of the fibre that gathers moss. She was not of the sort to let her limbs stiffen, her blood stagnate, and her feelings grow morbid, knitting stockings in the chimney-nook, while there was so much stirring work at hand to be done.

Seldom need the born toiler go in search of a vineyard, and Vrouw Lysbeth found ample scope for her energies in lending a helpful hand to Dominie Varick with his struggling little church, in works of benevolence among her neighbors, and in the care of her own people and estate.

In this last field she had already gained an enviable repute, not only as a prudent huysvrouw, but as a cunning tiller of the soil. There was an air of order, industry, and thrift about the widow's message which roiled the gall of divers small-minded fellow-cultivators in the town, who were loath to confess that a woman could outstrip them in good husbandry. Whether it was from prodigality in manuring, judgment in planting, or care in harvesting, there was no gainsaying the result. It was common talk that the Wickoff farm was better managed than during old Marten's life; it was plain enough, too, that its owner was beforehand with the world, and no thanks to anybody but herself.

Notwithstanding this bustling and successful life, Dame Lysbeth did not suffer her social interests and sympathies to languish. She was a woman and a mother; and it may be safely assumed that many a

stified yearning stirred her ample bosom, unknown by the world, as she sat of an evening by her well-winged hearth.

Deep and genuine was the good woman's joy, therefore, on receiving one day a letter from cousin Gertryd, saying that Steenie, who had been lying for weeks at death's door from a lung fever, brought on by reckless exposure at the time of the late executions, was now convalescent, that the doctor had ordered him sent to the country and turned out to pasture like a colt, and that thereupon nothing would serve the junker's whim but going to Vlacktebos.

Cousin Lysbeth, be it said, lost no time in sending back a cordial answer, and straightway bestirred herself to make ready for the invalid, who had been aforetime a frequent visitor at her house, and who, indeed, after her own little brood, stood highest in her favor.

The widow's dwelling, without and within, had a winning air of homeliness. The house looked not so much like something built as like something which had grown out of the ground. Long, low, and rambling, it had a grotesque resemblance to a big mushroom, with its heavy roof sweeping in a curved line from the ridge-pole almost to the ground, save where, in front, it was poked up, visor-fashion, to give place to the broad front stoop, which, with its comfortable benches and riot-running vines, seemed to woo the dusty wayfarer to rest and coolness. The heavy wooden shutters, pierced with crescent-shaped slits to let in the light, were, day-times, swung back and fastened by long, twisted, S-shaped irons. In the gable abutting upon the highway might be found evidences of the solidity and age of the homestead in the massive stone masonry supporting the base of the

chimney, and in the rude iron figures, giving the date of construction, imbedded in the rough-cast of the upper wall. At the corners stood two large casks to catch the rain-water. Over against the back door was a detached kitchen for the slaves, while on a plateau below the level of the house a line of out-buildings, including two roomy barns, surrounded an ample courtyard, in one corner of which bubbled a never-failing spring.

It was early summer; the bustle of planting was over, the house had been cleaned from cellar to garret, and the widow was in the best possible trim for company.

The visitor did not wait for a second bidding. He came riding up to the door on a pillion one afternoon, accompanied by one of his father's clerks and his old negro nurse.

Notwithstanding the care taken in his removal, he was a good deal shaken by the undue exertion. The hospitable look of the old house, the motherly figure of cousin Lysbeth in her white cap and homespun petticoat, standing in the doorway with both her arms extended in widest welcome, brought a smile to his tired eyes, and he suffered himself to be lifted down like a child and led into the cosey parlor, where he could scarcely walk upright without bumping his towering head.

He looked around the room with a convalescent gleam of satisfaction to find nothing displaced from its old-time order; the wide fireplace filled with fresh oak-boughs; the shining andirons; the pale pink hearth-tiles; the two snowy goose-wings standing upright on either hand; the floor sanded in the familiar waving pattern; the dark old cupboard in the corner

on its huge ball-feet; the low, straight-backed chair at the window with its puffy feather cushion, and the silk patchwork bag hanging from the back filled with unfinished knitting; the little table holding the big Amsterdam Bible with its burnished clasps; the two old prints on the wainscoted wall, depicting terrific naval battles won by noted Dutch admirals, which no doubt inspired young Marten with his wild longing for a seafaring life; the sacred guest-bed, in a deep niche at the end of the room, supporting, on its four fluted posts, a tester hung with gay chintz to match the counterpane and the covering of the padded old comfort-chair standing hard by in the corner.

At the first glance of her experienced eye cousin Lysbeth saw the state her patient was in, and assumed masterful control of him. Asking no questions, she took off his wraps, settled him in the big chair, peremptorily forbade him to move or to talk, and beckoning his attendants, went away to the kitchen. Coming back after a little with a glass of wine and a toothsome morsel, and finding the junker too tired to eat, she promptly put him to bed, darkened the room, and left him to sleep. Finding, on a second visit a half-hour afterward, that he was staring awake and in a high fever, she posted off one of her slaves to Nieuw Utrecht for Dr. Staats, and in the meantime administered an herb draught of her own brewing.

Although nominally in another village, the Staats farm was, in point of fact, not far away; for Vrouw Lysbeth herself lived close upon the boundary line. Near or far, the doctor took his time, and chose not to come until the next day, when he found the junker somewhat revived after a good night's sleep.

While studying his patient's symptoms, the doctor

talked in a neighborly way with Vrouw Wickoff about the planting of corn, the promise of calves, the fattening of pigs, and the like farmer's gossip. The patient listened with an air of deep content. It was part of the cure, this country talk; he assimilated it as a tonic; its earthy, out-of-door tone accorded so perfectly with notes of crowing cocks, of lowing cattle, with snatches of bird-song and the whole full-throated chorus of field and barnyard.

In due time the doctor took his leave, promising to send some medicine of his own compounding, — vastly better, of course, than cousin Lysbeth's draught, for it had a villanous taste and a Latin name rotundly accented on the antepenult.

Cousin Lysbeth cared not a fig for the Latin or the doctor's wise look, only in the case of Gertryd's child she chose not to take any chances. She failed not, however, to vent sundry sarcasms on doctors in general when the medicine failed to arrive, and she perforce had recourse again to the despised herb tea.

Next day, thanks to nature and cousin Lysbeth, the patient was so much improved that he begged to be taken out; and his nurse, being happily a believer in fresh air and sunshine, lost no time in bringing forth the big chair to the most sheltered corner of the stoop, where, having tucked in her charge with the responsible air of one conscious of skill and well content at having an occasion to display it, she went away to her dairy.

Entrance to Vrouw Wickoff's dairy was forbidden to all the world save one or two discreet women-servants. Naturally, this spot more than any other in the house was the object of her jealous care, as it was the source of her highest triumph as a huysvrouw.

The very approach to it on a summer's day was refreshing, with its cool air, its delicious fragrance of fresh butter and new curds. Once past the threshold, the widow gave herself up with professional gravity to its cares and duties ; skimming the thick, yellow cream with her own hands ; peeping with jealous eye, from time to time, into the deep churn which a stout negress pumped up and down ; adjusting the press upon the green cheeses ; scanning with sharp eye the stone-flagged floor, the white-washed walls, the well-scrubbed shelves, lest haply a stray insect or floating speck of dirt smirch the awful purity of the odorous cell.

Meantime Steenie, left to himself upon the stoop, watched the white clouds sail up the sky, watched the waving tree-tops, or followed the humming-birds among the flower-beds ; listening the while to the chit-chat of the robins in the orchard, the tinkling warble of the bobolink in the distant meadow, the crickets in the blooming clover, and through all and over all the souging accompaniment of the summer breeze.

Soothed by these combined influences, the junker was fast nodding off to sleep, when he was aroused by the sharp clatter of a horse's feet close by in the highway. The noise stopped at his kinswoman's gate. Then followed a murmur of voices and a burst of laughter, and the next minute, with romping step, a girl came dashing around the corner, cleared with a bound the three broad stone doorsteps, and was about to lay hold of the knocker, when she saw him and drew back.

"Catalina !"

The smile faded from her lips ; she caught anew

her spent breath, and with swift hand adjusted her disordered dress.

"I thought you were in bed," she said, and looked away with an air of embarrassment.

"I am sorry not to be sick enough to suit you."

Casting a look askance at his wasted figure, she reddened at the reproach.

"I am come — my father sent me — to bring you some medicine."

"So! You are very good. Stay! draw up yonder bench. Medicine! Sit you down now, and tell me about it."

It was still the same old tone of good-humored condescension, as to a child. The little frown and slight drawing up of her figure, by which she mutely protested against this persistent insinuation of infancy, were lost upon the languid junker.

"Vrouw Wickoff is within?" she asked, ignoring the invitation.

"Yes," he answered, with a look of amusement at the little snub, "but she likes not to be interrupted at her butter-making. See, here is a bench."

"I — my sister is waiting at the gate on a pillion."

"Go fetch her in straightway. Cousin Lysbeth will be glad to have you at dinner. You may tie the horse."

"Thank you much, but we have to go to the dominie's. I cannot stay," moving away, then stopping and hesitating. "Here is the medicine."

"You may put it on the bench, since you will not stay."

"These powders are to be taken once in four hours, and —"

The junker shook his head peevishly.

"— and a spoonful of this," holding out a vial, "on going to bed."

"I cannot remember all that," closing his eyes, wearily.

"'Tis to be well shaken before using, and —"

"Go tell it to cousin Lysbeth," moving impatiently in his chair, and groaning as if in pain.

"You want something?"

"If I had anybody to attend me."

She stood looking at him with a comical mixture of compassion and irritation.

"If it be — I will — what is it?"

"A draught of syllabub."

"I will call Vrouw Wickoff."

"There is no need; 'tis on the table within, — the blue jug."

She went quickly and brought the draught, which he barely tasted.

"Is that all?" she asked, as he handed back the jug.

"No."

She looked a little exasperated.

"The flies are biting me."

"If I knew where a fan was to be had!"

He waved his hand toward the parlor. She hastened away, and came back directly with a partridge-tail, spread, and finished at the node with a bit of ribbon.

What with her impatience and his nerveless grasp, the fan fell between them; whereupon, reaching forward to pick it up, he lost his balance and toppled forward in a heap to the floor. With a look of alarm and sympathy she sprang to help him, which she could do only by actually lifting him in her arms.

Hardly was he seated in the chair, however, when, with a deep blush, she cleared herself from this involuntary embrace, darted into the house, found the pantry, handed the medicine to the astonished Vrouw Wickoff, repeated the directions in a breathless tone, and was away around the back of the house like a whirlwind.

The clatter of horse's feet in the road was the first notice Steenie had of her going.

Breathing the pure country air and fed upon cousin Lysbeth's goodies, Steenie presently began to pick up. A very unexpected token of good-will came to him one morning in the shape of a note from the begum, tendering him, with many superfluous compliments, the use of her palanquin during his convalescence. On the heels of the bearer of the note, that there might be no room for declining, came the airy little vehicle itself.

Cousin Lysbeth was at first in much doubt about trusting her patient's neck in such an outlandish conveyance, but one or two trial trips silenced her objections.

Thenceforth, accordingly, Steenie took an outing every day. Lying at length, with the curtains thrown back, and borne along by two stout men, he visited all his favorite haunts in the country-side.

More from habit than the expectation of bagging any game, he took along his gun, and swept with roving eye the sideway coverts on the march.

One day, having had the good luck to shoot an overbold rabbit, and coming soon after to a pretty opening in the woods, the fancy seized him to picnic on the spot and cook his own dinner.

So sending home one of his bearers for a basket of

necessaries and the other in search of water, he busied himself in making a fire and dressing the rabbit.

Wearied by the unaccustomed effort, he threw himself down on the palanquin to watch the flames curl and crackle among the dry boughs he had heaped together. In this quiet pastime he was presently disturbed by outcries for help, mingled, as it seemed, with the snarling of enraged beasts.

Without thought of the consequences, he loudly replied. Encouraged by his answer, the cries turned in his direction; they sounded nearer and nearer, and directly, with a prodigious rustling of leaves and snapping of twigs, out from a neighboring thicket rushed Catalina and her shepherd dog closely pursued by a bristling wolf. Although covered with blood and much worsted by the fray, the dog turned back at every few steps to renew the contest, thus giving his mistress a chance to gain ground, which she failed not to improve.

Next to the French and the Indians, wolves ranked as the greatest pest of the early colonists. They were, however, held in contempt rather than dread, inasmuch as they seldom or never attacked human beings save where, as in this case, they were baited into a pursuing rage by dogs or sportsmen.

Like other youths of the day, Steenie had often hunted them, and now without alarm sat up on his couch, reached for his gun, and levelled it at the approaching beast. Directly he remembered that the precious charge had been wasted upon the rabbit. It was too late to mend the matter. Failing other missiles, he discharged at the enemy an ineffectual oath. Meantime, Catalina, in an agony of fright,

came rushing towards him and took refuge behind the palanquin. The plucky dog, making a last stand in defence of his mistress, was overpowered and disabled, while, with an intent and unamiable expression, the wolf came bounding towards the palanquin.

Clubbing his gun, Steenie made a show of resistance; but staggered by the onset of the beast, he was thrown back upon the couch, where he saved his throat only by the intervention of a plump cushion.

This, however, was but a makeshift; he had no strength to struggle with the brute; there was no help at hand; it was in all respects an unpleasant moment.

Happily, like other moments, it proved of limited duration. Directly he was vaguely conscious of an odor of smoke and singed hair in the palanquin. With a howl of pain the wolf dashed out. The junker feebly raised himself. There stood Catalina, quaking with terror, yet holding the exasperated beast at bay with a flaming brand. Again the unwary sportsman aimed a feeble blow with the butt of his flint-lock. Again the wolf turned upon him. Again Catalina interposed with her brand; whereupon, taking the hint, Steenie snatched a brand himself from the coals. Thus making common cause, they backed upon the fire and kept the wolf at bay. Opportunely, the slave sent for water appeared, bearing a dripping birch-bark measure. Steenie shouted to him. The man dropped his water, crept up softly behind, and with a powerful blow from a stout club laid the beast lifeless.

Exhausted by his excitement and unusual exertion, Steenie, without a word, threw himself on the palanquin.

"You are hurt — he tore you — you are bleeding! Oh, I was the cause of it!" cried Catalina, rushing to his side. "Cato, where is Kouba? Kouba! Kouba! How dare you bring him so far from home? Get water — do you see how white he is? Kouba! Kouba, I say! Where is Kouba?"

The slave explained that his fellow had been sent back on an errand.

"I will take his place, then."

The man stared.

"Come, get to your poles! We must carry him home!"

"Stop! Hold, I say! I am not hurt. You shall not."

The feeble voice from within was unheeded.

In obedience to an imperative gesture from his mistress, the slave took his place, and despite all objections, protests, and threats from their passenger they set forth.

The road was none of the best, but happily the distance was not great, and by dint of frequent stops — during which the passenger made futile expostulations — the inexperienced young bearer stuck to her task with a staying power one would scarcely have expected, till they reached the highway, where the returning Kouba met and relieved her of the task.

Next day, what with the fatigue and excitement, the convalescent showed himself the worse for the adventure, and cousin Lysbeth accordingly kept him in bed.

To this hard discipline the patient yielded with sorry grace, as he lay among his pillows sniffing the fresh air which floated in through the open window,

listening with eager ears to the varied sounds of life from without, and watching with wistful eyes the sunbeams which, streaming through the casement, lighted up here and there a tiny cresset among the grains of sand, and left a track of splendor along the jewelled floor.

In the course of the morning cousin Lysbeth was called to the door by a visitor, who would not heed the slave's bidding to enter. Through the open window the junker overheard, without scruple, bits of their talk.

"I trust he is none the worse for it?"

"Yes, but he is," answered downright Dame Lysbeth.

"Surely he is not brought to bed again?"

The patient's face wore a look of amused interest at the anxious tone of the inquiry.

"That is he."

"But — 't is not for long, think you?"

"God knows!"

The patient well-nigh betrayed himself by laughing aloud at this gloomy description of his state, thereby losing several sentences which followed. The next words that came to him were in the firm tones of cousin Lysbeth.

"You had best come in and see him yourself."

"No, no!" was the nervous answer.

"What message will you please to leave?"

"I — I — none at all."

"I will say only you came to ask."

"I am come to do nothing of the sort."

The sharp tone of this retort clearly puzzled the matter-of-fact huysvrouw not a little, who asked bluntly, —

"For what, then, do you call me from my work and waste my time here?"

"I was passing, and — and stopped to — ask after your health."

"For me? best thanks! I never had a sick hour since Marten was born."

"I am glad, and I hope your family will soon be as well. Good-day, huysvrouw."

Uttering her parting salutation in a tone of stilted dignity, the visitor went her way.

Steenie, as it proved, suffered no lasting ill-effects from his adventure; it was only cousin Lysbeth's love of discipline which kept him housed for a day or two. He was soon on his feet, stronger than ever, — so strong, in fact, that he declined the further use of the palanquin in a polite note which speedily brought the owner herself to wait upon him.

This visit proved, on more accounts than one, a notable experience. The begum had been invested with a new and indefinable interest ever since the wedding feast. Nor was her behavior on this occasion of a sort to lessen the impression.

For the first few minutes Steenie busied himself studying her very striking physical traits, as she exchanged greetings with his cousin. The two, as they sat before him, were at the poles of contrast. The delicacy of build, the elegance of dress and manner, the suggested subtlety of mind in every look and tone of the Oriental, could not on the round earth have found a better foil than in the massive bulk, the steady dignity, the simplicity of garb, and the uncompromising straightforwardness of the Dutch huysvrouw.

The junker's musings were presently interrupted by his visitor.

"And you, Mynheer,— I am glad from the heart to see you win back your health."

Steenie bowed, and murmured thanks.

"But when you are quite well, then," insinuatingly, "you will fly away."

"That will not be for a good while yet," spoke up cousin Lysbeth, "if he shows not better sense in taking care of himself."

"Your cousin would like well to keep you, I am sure."

"No, she will be glad to be rid of me; I make too much trouble."

The visitor directed a puzzled, inquiring look at Vrouw Wickoff.

Cousin Lysbeth wagged her head, but would not be drawn into a disclaimer.

"You should rather come to live with her forever," went on the visitor, turning with watchful eyes from one to the other. "'T is sad to be alone; and here there is land, good land for fine plantations, where a junker may come and make a home of his own."

"'T is a good place to visit," said Steenie, with mock reserve, but directing at the same time a grateful glance at his kinswoman.

"But you have always the thought of going back?" Steenie nodded.

"It must be, then, the heart is left yonder." The suggestion was accompanied by a searching glance and a quick withdrawal of the eyes.

A look of pain crossed the junker's face, and he became abstracted. Cousin Lysbeth noted the effect of the remark upon her patient, and, however much at a loss to account for it, instantly changed the subject.

"Your daughter is well, after all that the other day?"

"She is well," answered the begum, with a perplexed look.

"'Tis a mercy they were not both torn in pieces," went on cousin Lysbeth.

The begum turned from one to the other, with eyes full of the curiosity she thought it not polite to put into words.

"And carrying that — that thing such a distance, — 't was the work of a man!"

The listener bowed with a blank expression.

"And after all she did, I warrant me the heedless boy yonder has not thanked her yet."

Aroused from his musings by this direct reference to himself, Steenie reviewed with a mind-flash the words which had been passing through his ears, and said, quickly, —

"She would give me no chance."

By this time the begum's curiosity had reached a painful pitch, when cousin Lysbeth, suddenly fathoming her bewildered look, cried, —

"She did not tell you!"

The begum shook her head.

"Go on you, now, and tell her," said the dame to her cousin.

The story lost nothing in the grateful junker's recital. The begum's dark skin flushed as she listened; her breathless interest in the account constantly belying the affected indifference of her comments.

"It is nothing; but what danger for you! So! you then saved *her* life as well. You were weak, yes, yes — Catalina pitied you, she has a good heart — 'tis nothing — yes, Catalina is brave — you were an old

friend, she knew you yonder — 't is nothing — yet I am glad — yes, she is so shy — I will tell her — yes — all your thanks, but you must come yourself. Good-by — I keep you too long — I forget — forgive me ! Madam, I await a visit from you ; you will bring Mynheer. He should stay by you yet for a good while. I hope we shall see you many times. Good-by."

Steenie stared after their strange visitor, as deeply perplexed as cousin Lysbeth herself at her sudden agitation and abrupt departure.

XXVIII.

THE begum had made a shrewd guess as to the drift of Steenie's yearnings. Long before cousin Lysbeth pronounced him well enough to go, his thoughts were plainly turning homeward, as appeared by divers toilsomely composed and carefully sealed letters which he found means of sending up to town by the hands of neighboring farmers going to market. Getting back not a single word in return, he presently fell to moping. Vigilant cousin Lysbeth took alarm, and cast about for ways and means to distract his thoughts. She set him to mending tools and harness, sent him on ready-made errands, took him afield when overlooking the slaves, made him cast up farm accounts gathered here and there from chalked memoranda on the kitchen wall and the barn doors. Not that her own faithful memory needed any such mechanical aid, but because she was hard pushed to find fit work for a town-bred junker. Driven to straits, she one day took him to wait upon the Staatses, where the begum's marked chagrin at her daughter's absence greatly puzzled both her visitors.

All resources having been exhausted to content her homesick guest, cousin Lysbeth was fain at last to let him go, which she did with much reluctance and repeated warnings against youthful imprudence.

Arriving home, Steenie found in the outward aspect of the town an air of bustle and prosperity which it had never worn under Leisler ; but from certain re-

marks exchanged between his father and mother at the supper-table, he drew a moral not to take for gold all that glittered.

The new governor, as it appeared, far from fulfilling the high hopes which his coming had aroused, had already slipped from the heroic niche in which he had been too hastily enshrined; while from certain dark hints let drop by his father, the watchful junker surmised that the violent measures wherewith the new administration had been inaugurated, instead of proving of wholesome efficacy, had spread far and wide the poison of a deeper disaffection.

The following morning Madame Van Cortlandt stood upon the stoop when her son came out and passed down the steps. As a woman of the world, she let no trace of any thought or feeling stir her impassive face while noting the carefulness of his toilet, — his holiday coat, silk small-clothes, lace ruffles, and shining shoe-buckles. Whatever conclusions, indeed, she may have formed from his premature return home, from the loss of his habitual cheerfulness, of the object of his present errand, she kept her own counsels, and with wise restraint bided her time.

As for Steenie, he was too preoccupied to think of small politics at the moment, to think of any disguise of his mood or purposes. Greeting his mother, therefore, dutifully yet mechanically, he went his way to the well-known brick house in the Strand.

Arrived at the door, however, he was seized with a passing agitation, — a natural result, perhaps, of some weeks of doubts and misgivings. Pausing at the bottom of the steps, he seemed not able to summon resolution to go in. After a moment's hesitation he turned and walked along to the Waterpoort, where

he again came to a halt. Lingerin^g here for several moments, he presently whirled about as if with a sudden return of firmness, briskly retraced his steps, mounted the stairs, and nervously sounded the knocker.

On being shown in, he found the little parlor empty, the windows shut, and the room darkened. An ominous silence, indeed, brooded over the whole house, as though the shadow of the late tragedy still lay dark and heavy upon the once bustling and happy home.

It seemed an age to the impatient junker before Hester appeared. He was shocked into uttering an exclamation at the change in her. It was not only that her bloom was gone, that she had lost contour, that her old look of serenity was wanting; here was another individuality. He was not of an age or experience for subtle theorizing. That such a sudden and violent development of latent traits could take place in a flesh-and-blood fellow-creature as would dominate her known and normal characteristics was a thing as unknown in his experience as it was undreamed of in his philosophy. Happily or unhappily, the thought did not even occur to him. He hastened with outstretched arms to meet his sweetheart. Regarding him with lack-lustre eyes, in which was no gleam of welcome, she endured his embrace without returning it. Fondly, eagerly, pityingly, he looked into her eyes. Their glance was petrifying, — the old stony stare of the dungeon-cell.

“Hester, poor child! dear girl!”

He repeated the phrases over and over again, with every appealing and tender inflection. It was all he seemed able to say.

He led her presently to a chair. She sat down with an air of sufferance, as if waiting for him to have done. He was painfully discomfited; he tried to speak, but his voice stuck in his throat. Indeed, it was plain he was at an utter loss what to say. With whatever doubts and misgivings, he had come, clearly enough, expecting to resume their old relations. He was bewildered at finding it impossible, — at finding that the physical contiguity from which he had hoped so much brought no nearness; that between himself and this young creature who had grown to seem a part of his very being there had mysteriously intervened a yawning gulf, across which his piping human voice availed not to reach, and his pygmy arms stretched forth in vain to grasp back his treasure.

Unconsciously he grew old in heart and brain, as he sat staring at his dumb companion, while the interminable minutes dragged along.

Had that blighting shadow fallen also upon him? Not unnaturally the thought occurred to him and haunted him, till it seemed as if he were indeed wrestling with some malign influence ambushed there in the darkened room.

"Hester, poor child! dear girl!" he kept repeating, as one who talks in sleep.

On a sudden impulse he took her hands; they rested cold and limp in his grasp, but it gave him courage to go on.

"I have been down with a fever. I was sent away to get well — down to cousin Lysbeth's; it was a long time — I wrote you letters."

She nodded, without raising her eyes from their fixed stare at the floor.

"And I thought of you, poor girl, all the time. It

was hard to be so long away, but now I am well, now I am come back to stay ; we shall be happy again. Do not shake your head, darling. Look at me ; smile at me as you used to. Remember we have each other yet. Come, Hester, — listen to me, dear girl. Think how happy we used to be. We may be again, — why not ? We have done no wrong to any one. When this — this awful — shall pass away, we may be happy again. Take comfort, Hester. Think not upon all *that* too much ; think of the old times ; think I am here, — that I am faithful to you, and — ”

He stopped. Her lips moved ; he leaned forward eagerly to catch her words, which came husky and grating, as from a voice unused for years.

“ We are attainted ! ”

He studied her face with a puzzled look, as if she had spoken without sense. It was a full minute before he fathomed her meaning.

“ And what then ? Is it your fault ? Is it for anything you have done ? Does it make you anything other than what you were, — my own dear, faithful sweetheart ? ”

She shook her head, as if he were talking idly.

“ It takes away your goods and estates. I am sorry for your mother, your brother and sisters, but *you* need think nothing of that ; I shall have enough for both. Shake not your head, darling. ”

“ We are attainted ! ” she said again, with the same barrenness of hope.

He released her hands, and cast himself back in his chair with a sigh of discouragement.

As they sat thus in silence a door opened below-stairs, and the voice of her younger sister was heard softly calling to Hester. Realizing the uselessness

of prolonging the interview, Steenie rose at once to go. She made no protest, but mechanically extended her hand. He put it aside, and took her tenderly in his arms.

"You are not well, poor child! You have not recovered from that — You will be better when I come again. I will come soon, darling. Good-by! Good-by!"

Pausing upon the stoop to shut the door gently behind him, the junker heard a strange voice in the garden, and glancing over the wall, saw Barent walking with Cobus, among the vegetables. In the disturbed state of his feelings, it is doubtful whether the incident made even a passing impression upon his mind.

Next morning, overhearing his father express a purpose of sending a messenger to Hartford on important business, Steenie was somewhat startled at the suggestion of his own name by his mother, who urged it upon her husband with characteristic persistence. As for Steenie, he seemed at first not much pleased with the notion, but on a little reflection assented with a show of cheerfulness, not quite realizing the probable length of his absence.

He made no attempt to see Hester again before going; indeed, the importance and responsibility of his new duties distracted his mind for the moment from thoughts of her. It proved business of a sort to try his mettle. Realizing now the cause of his father's hesitation in committing it to hands so young and unskilled, he resolved to justify the confidence reposed in him.

Without mishap or adventure, he reached his destination, and acquitted himself creditably of his

errand. The result was duly made known at home. At the end of several weeks, expecting daily his recall, he was met by a courier from his father with congratulations upon his success, accompanied by minutes of some other matters of moment in the Massachusetts, confided to his management at his mother's instance.

Despite this flattering commendation and the natural gratification at succeeding in his first mission, it was nevertheless with a feeling of keen disappointment that the junker turned his face towards Boston ; and in the answer sent back to his father there was, mingled with many dutiful expressions, an unconscious little touch of resentment at his mother's interference.

The matter in the Massachusetts, as it proved, admitted not of such dispatch as the former. He was delayed many weeks, chafing at obstacles which he had not foreseen and could not surmount, so that before he again reached home several months had elapsed.

As he neared the city his impatience to arrive became quite uncontrollable. Outstripping his escort, he cruelly spurred his jaded horse, to gain, needlessly, as it seemed, a few useless hours, and enter the town before nightfall. So, too, without any more tangible excuse, he went a foolish, roundabout course in order to go in by way of the Waterpoort and ride along the Strand.

Passing the little brick house, he came almost to a halt, scanning with painful eagerness the door, the jealously shut windows, and every dumb brick, for some intelligence of Hester. Seeing no sign of life, the remembrance of his last visit perhaps recurred

to him, for he repressed a shudder as he looked away.

Turning into the dock, he was aroused from his gloomy preoccupation by a sight which sent the spurs into his horse's sides, so that the poor brute reared and cavorted, despite his spent condition. There, a few paces distant, looking calmly towards him, stood Hester, attended by Barent Rhynders. She showed no surprise at his sudden appearance, but returning his agitated greeting by a grave courtesy, passed along as if they had parted but yesterday.

Various adroit measures adopted by Madam Van Cortlandt next morning, proved unavailing to keep her son at home. As soon as breakfast was over, without a minute's delay he proceeded to the Strand.

He found Hester in the garden with her sister. The latter ran away, but Hester came directly to meet him, with something of her old-time manner. His face brightened at once, its anxious look giving place to one of extreme agitation. He fairly stammered in his first hurried greeting.

"It is a long — long time — I thought not to be gone so far, else I — it was business of moment — I could not come — you understood, I hope, I could not — I wrote you by every hand — if you had the letters, you know why I was so neglectful, as it seemed."

"Yes," she said, with a little movement to free herself from his embrace, "I had the letters. I was glad to hear you were in health and well quit of your business."

He looked confounded at her tone. It was that of one who turns aside from an absorbing purpose to answer a child. It was many minutes before he could rally self-possession to go on, as they walked

back and forth, back and forth, between the rows of currant bushes.

Breaking free at last from the constraint which seemed every moment weighing down upon him with deadlier force, he suddenly stopped, and cried with impetuous directness:—

“Hester, what is between us? What is it, I say? A terrible trial has come upon you. You suffered cruelly. I suffered too, in thinking of your pain, in seeing you crushed under such affliction. I have waited long for the wound to heal. It was a grievous wound, but I was not the cause of it. I have done you no wrong. I have been faithful to you through all. You are pledged to me. I am come at last to claim you!”

She made a movement as if to speak, but he went on with added vehemence:—

“’T is time we stopped dwelling upon the past and turned to the future. We cannot amend the wrong that has been done; we must bethink us how to make the best of the life that is left us.”

They had reached the bottom of the garden, and turned to come back. Her attitude, standing before him in the path as if barring the way; her utterance, slow at first, but gathering impetus as she went on; her controlled manner and measured tones, all combined to give a memorable emphasis to her answer. Meantime, to her astonished hearer, her expression seemed visibly to change, as she talked, from the callowness of youth to the maturity of middle age. It was as if a mask had dropped, showing how suffering had developed the woman, morally and mentally, with the ripening efficacy of years.

“Amend the wrong! No! Neither can we avenge

crime, nor wash out the stain of blood-guiltiness that lies upon the heads of those yonder, nor call back martyred men from the grave! Vengeance is for God; he has said it!"

The tone in which the words were uttered might have startled her hearer, had he not been so impressed with the transformation wrought in the speaker herself that he scarcely heeded her words.

"Such part of the wrong we may not amend," she went on, "but we may amend such as lies in the power of man. We may wipe out the blot put upon the names of the dead. We may show their innocence to the world. We may have their memory restored to honor in men's mouths. We may wipe out the taint that has been put upon their innocent wives and children."

Awed by this sudden revelation of character, the junker stood for a space helplessly staring; it was only when the prolonged silence became painful that he made a blundering attempt to speak.

"I thought not that — that you would take the matter so much to heart, Hester — I — I" — he floundered, realizing, perhaps, that this was an unhappy beginning. "I hope you may gain your end, — 'tis just you should; but — but touching yourselves, I hope this blow may not fall so heavily as you fear."

"'Tis for mother we fear."

"Surely, after so grievous an affliction, she will be suffered to live in peace."

"How and where? She is driven from home already."

"You will quit this house?"

"What choice have we? They turn us out; 'tis a favor we have been suffered to stay these few weeks

while mother kept her bed, brought to the very door of death by their doings. Better for her she had died ! ”

“ Good God ! ’t will surely not be pushed ; ’t is wanton cruelty ; if it were but made known to his Excellency — ”

“ Think you we would ask mercy of that butcher ? ” she broke in, almost fiercely.

“ What then, my poor girl, will you do ? ”

“ Sister Walters will take us in till Cobus has a hearing of his Majesty. He has gone to England ; he will make known all this wickedness to the king.”

“ But if he fail ? Your brother is young and unused to courts.”

“ He will not fail ; if his Majesty be a man, and not a monster, he cannot but listen.”

“ My poor Hester, ’t is hard to get speech with the king ; one must have influence at court ; there are a thousand difficulties in the way ; his Majesty is plagued with much business.”

“ If he will not hear, he can read, at least. Cobus has it all writ down in petitions signed by a hundred names of good, God-fearing men.”

“ A flood of petitions pour into the royal closet every day ; the king has not time for half of them. He hands them over to his ministers. These gentlemen are not fond of giving themselves pains. They take their own time ; they hear all sides of the story ; they put the business off from time to time ; new matters arise, public needs which claim a preference. Yéars go by ; suitors grow old and gray and faint-hearted, and give up the hopeless quest. I would not discourage you by this gloomy picture ; I would but save you from disappointment.”

"We shall bide our time," she said, resolutely, "and give them no peace till our suit is granted."

"But I — we — where is my part in all this waiting? I might aid; I would fain help in anything I may," he added, in a halting way. "I might at least be of comfort to you. Surely, *we* need not await the issue of all this. We are pledged for better or worse; not for one day, but for life. We may be married all the same; you will not be less dutiful as a daughter that you have become a wife."

She hesitated; for the first time, it seemed, a moment's thought of him crossed her mind. There was a touch of commiseration in the look she turned upon him; her voice softened, but in no whit abated its tone of inflexible resolution, as she answered, —

"Never will I give a thought to marriage until this wrong be amended."

A deep flush overspread his face. He stood looking steadily at her until it slowly faded, giving place to a pallor which made his sun-browned cheeks look russet-hued.

"Never?"

"Never!"

The word fell from her lips like an iron bolt, but no bolt ever moulded could have dealt him such a blow. Large beads of moisture gathered on his forehead, and slowly trickled over his temples, as he stood with clinched hands and lips tight pressed, like one controlling himself under some physical pang.

Her eyes were turned away, perhaps purposely, to avoid witnessing the effect of her words. Each must have felt there was no more to be said. The painful silence which ensued was broken by the sound of some commotion at the house, — the sound of hurrying feet

and some one calling. Hester turned to look. Her sister came flying down the path, followed by Vronw Leisler, crying, with awe-stricken looks, —

“ My child, my child, it has come at last ! Your father is avenged ! ”

“ What ? ”

“ He is dead, — that wicked man.”

“ Who ? ”

“ The governor ! ”

“ God ’s hand is in it ! ”

XXIX.

THE stir caused in the community by the death of Governor Slougher was due not so much to grief felt for the defunct as to anxiety regarding the character and policy of his successor. This question, indeed, so engrossed the attention of all those in any way connected with the administration that for a while nothing else was thought of.

There is, therefore, less ground for surprise that Madam Van Cortlandt did not at once remark her son's sudden despondency. Once returned to home duties, however, the watchful matron was not long blind to the matter. Without troubling herself overmuch to account for it, she recognized the need of some timely intervention, and with a mother's license took measures accordingly. No treatment, it would seem, could have been better suited to the case than that adopted, — of sending him off on a trip to the West Indies with his cousin, Captain Marten Wickoff.

Steenie made no objection, nor expressed any gratification. He merely assented, and looked on in apathy while his energetic mother made all the arrangements for the voyage. Bluff Captain Marten had many private interviews with his kinswoman, and was doubtless given a hint as to the trouble from her point of view. Between them they kept secret the day and hour of sailing, so that the unsuspecting junker was hustled on board the bark early one morning, before

any "compunctious visitings of nature" could interfere with their resolve.

Captain Marten faithfully followed his private instructions. No leisure was given his young cousin for indulging in morbid fancies. He was kept hard at work and fed upon plain fare, until he came gradually to find in the free, wholesome life, so varied by chance and peril, the solace felt by many another world-sick wretch before him. Moreover, the voyage was destined to be savored by a sort of sea-spice he little dreamed of. Two days out from Sandy Hook a sail hove in sight, which behaved in a way not at all satisfactory to Captain Marten. After studying the stranger for a long time in silence, on a sudden he threw down his glass and flew about with very unusual activity. Ordering all sail on and the decks cleared, he presently directed the crew to make ready to throw over the cargo or stand to their guns, as the case required.

Steenie heard all this with a little creeping of the flesh. Heretofore a pirate had been merely a bugbear; he now saw the fabulous monster realized. As in the nursery tales pirates are always burned, sunk, or brought to some condign end, he felt no doubt of the issue in this case, and, arming himself with a cutlass, longed to come to close quarters. His enthusiasm, however, was somewhat dampened by the captain's blunt answer to his questioning as to the result of such a proximity.

"Do! damn 'em! They'd sink the ship, and make every mother's son of us walk the plank!"

In view of this very uncomfortable probability, the valiant landsman straightway developed more interest in the captain's policy of "showing his heels."

Thanks to his stout vessel and good seamanship, the prudent captain at last succeeded in outstripping his enemy, and escaping with the loss of only a small part of his cargo.

Matters had come to such a pass that this experience, far from being unusual, was accepted as one of the ordinary perils of the sea; and although the rest of the voyage was accomplished in safety, they learned, on arriving at St. Kitt's, of a large Spanish galleon which had been sunk in plain sight of the town by the rakish stranger who had given them chase; and coming ashore they found the most absorbing topic among sailors and merchants was the doings of these bold bandits,—all of which made a profound impression upon Steenie's mind, as will presently appear.

If no other gain came from the voyage, Madam Van Cortlandt noted with silent satisfaction its effect upon her son's health. Madam naturally enough concluded that one who could eat and sleep like this sun-bronzed junker was no longer a fit subject for anxiety. That she pushed further her conclusions, and founded upon this experience certain sweeping and unsafe generalizations, was the fault of her temperament. Lest any undue prejudice attach to her on account of it, let it be remembered that dogmatism is for the most part harmless; that it is always amusing, and indeed, viewed aright, is not without a certain ethical value.

Nobody in the world, perhaps, was more perfectly aware of Madam's limitations than her own silent and conservative husband. At the same time, nobody listened to her with greater deference. When, therefore, upon this occasion, she emphatically pronounced her conclusions upon youthful affairs of the heart, and

the proper treatment of them after the fashion of croup and measles, he dryly coughed, without committing himself by an assent.

Steenie, meanwhile, unconscious of being an object of concern, felt himself under no obligation to confirm his mother's theories, but went his own gait, in a state of apathy not to be easily distinguished from content.

Returning in this listless mood from a long ride northward upon the island, about a week after his landing, he was aroused by a sound of somebody running after him, and presently a breathless voice was heard calling him by name :

"Mynheer — Mynheer Stephanus !"

Turning, he saw Tryntje hurrying with might and main to overtake him.

"You, vrouw ? I'm glad to see you."

"Ei, Myn-Mynheer !" she gasped, coming up. "I thought never to see ye again. They — they said ye'd gone beyond sea."

"So I did, and have come home again. How is Ripse these days ?"

"The schelmje ! — he grows like a weed."

"And Rip ?"

"Ever the same ; he is away at the market, or he'd be glad of a sight o' ye. But I have n't run the breath out o' my body to tell my own affairs ; I've something for ye."

"So !"

"'T is yonder in the house ; ye went so fast I could n't stay to bring it, but if ye'll turn back —"

"What is it, then ?"

The dame looked cautiously about, and lowered her voice.

“ A letter ! ”

“ For me ? ”

“ Ye'll need no help to guess who sends it.”

It would have puzzled keener wits than Tryntje's to say whether the change which took place in the listener's countenance was due to pleasure or pain. Staring at her a moment while recovering from his astonishment, he said, gravely, —

“ I will go.”

Walking his horse to keep pace with the panting vrouw, he did not exchange another word with her, however, until they came to the house. Everything there looked much the same ; the geese feeding on the green ; the little stoop with its well-scrubbed benches ; the tulip-beds, now filled with summer flowers ; Ripse, much grown, in a little round cap, and a grotesque frock made from an old doublet of his father's, chasing the poultry with a stick, — all might have awakened old remembrances in the junker's bosom, if he had not been too preoccupied to take note of anything.

Tryntje did not keep him waiting ; she came out unfolding a long piece of clean linen, from which she produced the precious letter.

Steenie took it, and, gazing at it a full minute in an abstracted way, rode off without breaking the seal, or even giving the little vrouw a word of thanks for her pains.

It was only when quite alone upon the highway that, dropping the reins upon his horse's neck, he read the letter. He read it, indeed, over and over again. Who will say he had not cause ?

HONORED FRIEND, — It has come upon me sence seeing you I made an unfit answer to what you said to me

meant in all love and kindness. Truly I have no cause to give any butt kind words as I have no other butt kind thouts towards you. My mind as you know was full off other things as God our Heavenly Father knows full well it had call to be.

For that I was always a stubborn and undutifull child to that dere and blissed martyr we have lost I am now arroused to a sinse of my great sin and wickedness and from this out must ever strive to make what poor amends in me lye in following his example and heeding his counsells remembered in my mind.

After some note taken off my feelings I find them still turned towards you much as of old butt my sinse are benumbed as it where and all within me seems awry. I am like a plant trod to earth and lift myself feebly from the dust all bruised and warped as I must never again expect to stand upright. See then what need I have to commend myself to God's Mercy by putting away all weak and foolish desires off my own heart and yield my thouts and strenth to lifting up from the foul mire and making clear off smirch the memory of that blissed one I held in such small esteem whiles living. Praying you then to think me not so much unmindfull off your true affection as pledged to a duty which holds me heart and soul

Your humble ser't

HESTER LEISLER.

The reader was recalled to himself by his horse stopping before the city gate. Thrusting the letter into his pocket, he gathered up the reins, and by the shortest way proceeded to the little house in the Strand. He found it shut and deserted. He stared about in dismay. The house in its desolation rose before him a dumb but eloquent accuser, afflicting him with a sense of personal guiltiness.

He sat for a space as not knowing what to do ; then bethinking him of Tryntje, turned and rode back to the bouwerie. The evening was warm, the door and windows stood open, and through the still air the discordant voice of the little huysvrouw was heard getting Ripse ready for bed.

Steenie stopped. Perhaps it was the song which reminded him of that time long ago when he first came to the bouwerie. Surely, Tryntje's voice was one upon which to found a remembrance. Whatever the impulse, he yielded to it, and lingered at the door. Quite absorbed in her task, Tryntje held the fat, half-naked young one on her knee, beguiling him into spasms of laughter by some nursery trick, as she alternately slipped on and pulled off his bit of a night-gown, singing the while with unmodulated vigor, —

“Duur zat een Aapje op een stokje
Achter myn moeder's kenken deur
Hy had een gnatje in syn rokje
Duur stok dat schelmje syn kopje deur.”

Waiting patiently until the game was ended and Ripse tucked into his cradle, Steenie presented himself, and making known his errand, learned that Vrouw Leisler and her family were scattered among their friends and relatives, and that Hester was visiting Catalina at Nieuw Utrecht.

Madame Van Cortlandt was equally surprised and pleased, next morning, when Steenie announced his purpose of making a visit to Vlacktebos. She lost no time in making up a hamper of town delicacies, and sent him off with a redundancy of messages common to that time of infrequent intercourse.

The visit was a joyful surprise to cousin Lysbeth. She stood by chance on the stoop as Steenie came around the corner of the house, just before supper, and grasped him in her heartiest fashion. He was even more welcome than usual, for he brought the latest news from her darling Marten, and gave her, as they sat on the stoop in the evening, an account of his voyage, together with many details of her son's daily life, of which she had little notion.

Cousin Lysbeth was naturally interested and puzzled, next morning, when directly after breakfast, her kinsman announced his intention of going to Nieuw Utrecht. She kept her firm lips shut, however, and asked no question; and as for Steenie, if by chance it occurred to him that his doings might awaken curiosity, he showed no disposition to gratify it.

Arrived at the doctor's door, he beheld a well-known person sitting in the cool shadow of the stoop, whom, from his disconcerted look, it was plain he had not thought of encountering.

"You are very welcome, Mynheer," said the lady, with a profound obeisance, blinking away industriously her first look of surprise and curiosity. "Vrouw Wick-off is well, I hope? She must be greatly rejoiced to see you so restored to health."

Steenie murmured some commonplace as he took off his broad-brimmed hat, seated himself upon the bench opposite his hostess, and looked wistfully about.

"It is pleasant to come to the country in the warm season," went on the lady, much busier with her private thoughts than with those she saw fit to put into words.

Her visitor assented absently, with furtive looks cast hither and thither.

"Your worshipful father and mother, — I hope they are in health?"

"They are both well, I thank you much."

A word in Hindostanee whispered apart to an Indian servant who sat on a straw mat just within the open door, and a tray was brought, holding a cool drink and some cakes, of which the guest partook as knowing not what else to do.

"'Tis far away from the world, here among our bouweries; we hear only the echoes; 'tis like opening a book when some one comes from town to tell us what passes," continued the begum, keeping up the conversation as a running accompaniment to her thoughts, while she studied the junker askance, and accounted in her own way for his abstraction.

"There is not much to tell," he answered, with signs of restiveness.

"Is there not great stir of late on account of the pirates?"

"To be sure; that there is, Madam, a prodigious stir," with a touch of interest. "They are become a great plague; they are sweeping our commerce from the sea; the Lords of Trade are busy with the matter."

"'Tis whispered here by mischief-makers his Mightiness is in league with them."

"Governor Fletcher! 'Tis a great scandal!" cried Steenie indignantly. "He is an honest man, and gives himself up heart and soul to the good of the province. His health is broken by overwork and newness to the climate."

"I believe you; yet some there be, and not a few, scruple not to say it boldly, together with many other evil things of his Excellency. You know well them

I mean," returned the lady, significantly, curbing her tongue just in time from a closer description of a class among whom her own husband was known to be a leader. "They never forgive it that he holds no fellowship with the followers of that monster who met his deserts so long ago."

Old memories stirred within the junker as he gazed at his singular hostess, noted her eyes flash and her vibrating voice deepen in intensity. Notwithstanding his astonishment, however, he failed not to take instant advantage of the opportunity she had given him to lead the conversation in the direction he wished.

"Whatever the crimes of that wretch, 't is time they were forgotten."

"And who, pray you, keeps the memory of them fresh but his own friends?"

"Poor creatures, they are to be pitied."

"How pitied, when they fill all England and America with cries for vengeance?"

Leaning far forward, with her beady eyes fixed glaringly upon her visitor, the excited begum by turns tossed back the floating muslin head-gear from her heated face, and plucked with the vengeful movement of a bird of prey bits of down from a feather fan which she fluttered in her hands.

"Surely his family are innocent, yet are they branded with infamy, and cast out like beggars into the street."

"For the woman, for the children, give them back their poor belongings, — I would not have them suffer; but for *him* —" She finished her sentence with a violent gesture, and plucked again at her fan.

"I am glad to hear that you show kindness to the

living, however you may feel towards the dead," said the junker significantly.

"'T is my husband does that," she rejoined, instantly and emphatically, as if to show her qualified approval of the act, "and Catalina, you know —"

Her hearer nodded, and while she still stuck at a word he came bluntly to the point towards which the whole conversation had tended.

"Hester is here. I would speak with her."

A look of mortification, quickly controlled, passed over the lady's tell-tale face.

"Yes, surely. 'T is most unlucky she is gone walking with my daughter, but they cannot be long; they will come back to dinner. You will wait?"

"With many thanks, no; if it please you, I will follow them."

"Ah, I am most wretched!" with an expression of mock despair. "If I but knew whither to send you!"

"Never fear! I shall not be long in finding them."

Seeing her visitor so determined, the lady made a show of catechising the slaves, and at last gained the information that the two girls had gone to a hill, not far off, overlooking the sea.

With a hurried leave-taking, the impatient junker strode off in the direction pointed out. Across some fields, through a wood, and up a gentle slope, and he was there.

The search was not a long one, for directly he came to the summit of the hill and looked about, there, under an oak-tree close at hand, sat the two maidens, busily engaged in closest talk.

Steenie coughed, and they both looked around. Catalina started up instantly, and a flush overspread

her face. Hesitating a moment, she dropped a slight courtesy to the intruder, muttered a word to her friend, and turned to go.

Hester made a movement to clutch her by the petticoat, and Steenie uttered a half-hearted protest, but the fugitive held her course, and was soon out of sight.

The two left behind found it an awkward meeting. It had been made worse, if possible, by Catalina's flight. Hester rose and gravely courtesied. Both stood silent for a space, not knowing what to say.

But the junker had come with a purpose, and he did not suffer it to grow cold. Making an impatient gesture as if to brush away the constraint which held them both dumb, he approached, and put forth his hand.

"I had your letter but yesterday," he said. "I am just come back from a voyage to the Antilles. I have been long away."

"I am glad to see you safe returned," she answered simply, but with a touch of consciousness which was wanting in their former interview.

"Your letter gave me great comfort," he went on, leaning against the tree, while she stood uneasily a little apart. "I know not why it should, unless it be that at our former meeting you," — he hesitated, stooped and picked up a dry twig, which he broke idly in his fingers — "you seemed not quite your real self."

She looked troubled, but did not answer.

"For myself, I was so downcast that I was long time quite without hope, until little by little the thought came to me that your great affliction had unsettled your good sense, and turned you aside from a right way of thinking."

"I have but one way of thinking," — she spoke calmly and with a touch of pride, — "which is ever as God gives direction to my thoughts."

"'Tis not safe to take for God's doing what may more likely be the effect of evil counsels forever sounded in your ears," he retorted, with a little heat.

"One needs not evil counsels to think amiss," was the instant reply, delivered in a tone coldly significant.

Directly Steenie saw his mistake, and as if relieved at having freed his mind of some long-stored bitterness answered with an utter change of voice and manner, a reminiscence of his old masterful way with the girl.

"Let us have done with upbraiding! Let us have done once and for all with by-gones which had best be forgotten! We have both had trouble enough; we have both carried about sad looks and heavy hearts till 'tis time we cast them off. Come, Hester! Come, sit you down now, dear girl, beside me, and remember only you are my sweetheart yet, and bethink you it rests only with ourselves whether our lives are to run to waste and nothingness, or we are to find some cheer and comfort in the days that are left to us."

As he spoke he threw himself on the ground at the foot of the tree, and motioned her to a place at his side; but she, looking very ill at ease, remained standing.

"Hester, I say, come, sit you down. Let us have a talk like the old times. Tell me your mind. Show me your whole heart. If I hold still my old place *there*, then all is right yet."

She hesitated, still much discomfited.

"See, here is your seat waiting. Come," he con-

tinued, half playfully, "you shall not escape. Come, I say, will you wait to be haled hither?"

With an embarrassed flush and no very good grace, she at last sat down by his side.

"Now," he cried, taking her hand and burying it out of sight between his own big palms, "what shall ever come between us again? Are we not happy? Are we not, eh, little one? I feel at least a thousand years younger than yesterday, and my heart, or whatever it be within me which feels, weighs but a feather, which this morning was a ton. Did I not do well to come and seek you out? And all, too, on account of your precious letter, which had well-nigh missed me! What, tongue-tied still?" he asked, with an anxious glance at her downcast face. "Have you then no word for me?"

Her whole person showed by certain nervous movements that she was making ready to speak, and clearly with the greatest effort. His face clouded, perhaps with a premonition, as he watched her, and waited in almost breathless suspense for her words.

"Glad would I be to take part in your cheer and speak some word which would answer to your hope or give you comfort, but" — she stopped, and plainly had to call up all her resources of firmness to go on — "but what can I say? As I set forth in my letter, my heart is still bound to you, but I can give no ear to my own inclinations. I must go the way laid out for me, I must do the work appointed for my hands."

The junker held fast his tongue, although an impulse of impatience convulsed his whole person.

"'Tis a voice out of the grave calls me to this work, friends and kindred unite in it, whiles a still,

small whisper within, which I know no other but as the voice of God, swells the cry, till I find no peace day or night but in thinking how best to compass this charge laid upon me."

"Listen, Hester," Steenie began, after a few minutes had passed in ominous silence,—began in a voice whose measured tone showed the restraint he had put upon himself. "Once more I say, Do all this that is required of you, do this which your conscience compels. I would not withhold you. But again I demand, What hinders you should be faithful to me as well? What makes it needful that whiles you are true to one you should be false to the other?"

"'False'!" she repeated, weighing the word a moment before proceeding; "'t is not a question of true or false; consider the matter only in a right light. What means the dominie when he reads out of the good book yonder that man cannot serve both God and Mammon? 'T is that a weak mortal cannot follow two paths at the same time. Either must he go the one shown of God, or that pointed out by his own selfish passions."

"Truly; and pray you tell me how long is it since I was exalted to the high post, in your esteem, of serving at need as type of greed and lust and all unrighteousness? There remains, it would seem, but the part of Beelzebub still unplayed."

Panoplied in that densest of all armor which turns the shafts of wit, she went on, without the least sense of smart, in a tone calmly controversial.

"Whiles I am true to a higher bidding, I cannot well be *false* in any wise." That word plainly rankled in her mind, for she concentrated her attack upon it. "To be false to one's self is oftentimes to be

true to God; 'tis better, then, in that way, to be false. What is false? 'Tis but a word. I shall have no fear of any word whiles I have the sense of right action."

Starting up as if irritated beyond longer control, the junker made no answer, but paced swiftly up and down in the shadow of the tree. After a moment Hester rose also, and carefully shaking the wrinkles out of her skirt, made a movement to go. He suddenly stopped in his feverish march.

"Is this, then, all the answer you would make?"

"What other can I give?" she asked, still shaking her skirt.

"You bid me wait for years as you would say, 'Wait till next Lord's Day morning!'"

"Why should you think 't will prove so long?" she asked, looking up from her adjusted drapery with untroubled eyes.

"What matter why? I have cause. I know after what manner they conduct these affairs. It will be for years, I say, — for weary, hopeless years; it may be indeed, for life itself. And all for what? What, tell me! A whim, a caprice. Oh, Hester, Hester," he cried, catching her passionately in his arms, "think what you are doing? Is my happiness nothing to you? Think of my misery! You will, you do, — I see it in your face." He covered her blooming cheek with kisses. "I knew you could not be so cruel. Say then you will come with me! — Nay, you shall not go till you speak the word, — I swear you shall not! Now — now — there, I give you breath! Will you come with me, I say? There needs but one word to answer."

He released her. She was flustered by the em-

brace; her cheek was burning from the attack of his ardent lips. She smoothed back her disordered locks and adjusted her dainty cap, while her face settled slowly back into its old lines of calm inflexibility as she answered, —

“If it was but to follow my own heart —”

He saw the look, he heard the tone; it was enough. Waiting not for another word, he turned about and plunged out of view into the thicket.

XXX.

LANDING at the dock from the ketch which had brought him over from Breuckelen, Steenie for the first time bethought him that cousin Lysbeth might wonder at his sudden disappearance; accordingly he flung the boatman an extra string of seawant, and bade him send back at the first opportunity a word of explanation to Vrouw Wickoff.

Watching the clumsy little boat until it reached midstream, he turned, with a deep sigh, and sauntered listlessly homeward. It was after sundown and he was late for supper, but he took no note of the hour. Time and place had become barren names to him; he wandered as the straggler from a caravan in mid-desert, aimless and hopeless among the drifting sands.

As in this mood, he dragged with heavy-footed pace across the bridge, he suddenly felt himself clapped upon the shoulder and a hearty voice sounded in his ear.

“Where away now, Mynheer?”

Looking up, he recognized a young Englishman whom he dimly remembered to have met latterly at the governor's house, at church, and at divers routs and frolics among the foremost people in the town. The fact that he could not recall the man's name showed the extent of their acquaintance.

“Fie, now, Mynheer Van Cortlandt! you are surely never going to affect not to know me? We have met

more than once. Egad, with so many friends in common, we have very good warrant to consider ourselves old acquaintance; the quicker to bring about such a result, what say you now to going home with me to pot-luck?"

Taken aback at this unexpected offer of hospitality, Steenie began to stammer some pretext for declining, but the watchful stranger gave him no chance.

"See you there, now, what labor you have to find an excuse, the surest of all signs that you have none at all. One may see by your air, moreover, you have no errand on hand."

In his state of limp irresolution, the junker needed nothing so much at the moment as somebody to think and act for him. The stranger may have seen this, for taking his arm with the license of an intimate, he marched him away, saying, laughingly, —

"Come, Mynheer, you may invent as many excuses for declining as pleases you, on the way, so long as you end by accepting. Never fear, too, but I will make your peace at home; for know you, I have grown into great favor with your worshipful father while you were away voyaging."

Expressing no surprise or curiosity, Steenie suffered himself to be led away like a docile child, without so much as demanding the name of the new friend who had taken so masterful a control of him.

As it turned out they had not far to go, for the stranger lived not a stone's-throw away, in a fair brick house in Liberty Street. Entering, Steenie had a confused sense of unusual luxury in the furnishing, and his notice was especially drawn to the floor by the odd sensation of walking upon a carpet, the first he had ever in his life beheld. A rustling and patter-

ing of small feet was heard presently in the hall, and in bounded a pretty child of ten years, who leaped into her father's arms, while a quiet, gentle-looking woman, dressed with much richness, stood smiling a welcome in the background.

The lady was introduced as Mrs. Kidd, whereupon Steenie directly recognized in his friend one Capt. William Kidd, who had lately been sent over by the government on some special service requiring boldness and skill. Thereupon he regarded his host with more attention and momentarily growing interest. His charm lay not so much in his handsome person, elegant dress, or engaging manners,—it is doubtful if, in his preoccupation, Steenie noted these historical traits,—but in something back of these; a characteristic of temperament, shown in the abounding vitality, the high-hearted hope and reckless gayety, which caught and fixed the visitor's desponding gaze and drew him like a loadstone.

Feeling himself, as he afterwards described his state to the dominie, like a disused harp flung unstrung upon the wayside, he welcomed this strange minstrel who, rescuing him from the rubbish, had attuned him to a new and stirring measure. The minstrel indeed seemed able to sound what chord he would, and the harp lapsed back into its tuneless state when his inspiring hand quitted the strings. This was apparent when, after convivial sessions with his new friend, the guest took his homeward way at the heels of a lantern-swinging slave, and straightway fell again a victim to his old enemy, lurking for him in midnight ambush.

Captain Kidd, however, showed no disposition of leaving his new friend a prey to megrims. He sought

him out at his home, dragged him forth to the sunlight and bustle of every-day life, made him by degrees a familiar guest at the luxurious little fireside in Liberty Street, and led him, as historical gossips whisper, into an occasional carousal, which, whatever it may be accounted now, was held no very heinous offence at the time.

Let it not be thought from anything foregoing that Kidd was an idler. On the contrary, he was the busiest man in town; so busy, in fact, that his less busy neighbors grew very curious as to his movements. What meant his frequent flying visits to distant points on the seaboard? What meant his constant communication with Hartford and the Massachusetts by couriers who came on blown and jaded horses, demanding entrance at the Landpoort at unheard-of hours of night? What meant the long and whispered confabs with rough and sinister-looking men seen hanging around the dock?

In the sanctity of confidence, the secret of all this was let slip to the wondering Steenie. It came at first in the shape of insinuations, innuendoes, and dark hints of changes in the air, of a thunder-bolt hanging over the unsuspecting province. With growing trust in the junker's discretion, many things were presently made clearer. There need be no fear now of betraying the captain's secret in the matter of a hoary old bit of history. "The lords of trade," he explained, in an impressive whisper, "are at last aroused to action. The king himself has taken a hand in the matter. War, a bloody war of extermination, is to be waged against the pirates. The colonists are looked to for aid. That they may act more efficiently they are to be thrown together into one

body politic; one governor is to be set over all, — a new man, a strong one, a man chosen for this end (not a whisper of all this, mind you, Van Cortlandt, or I am ruined!), a friend of my own, as it seems!" added the speaker with a wink. "See, here are his initials, R. C., signed to a memorial to their lordships recommending that the command of the fleet and chief conduct of the enterprise be committed to — whom think you? Why, no other than one Captain William Kidd, as a person well fitted for the post, 'by his great skill as a mariner, his bold and adventurous disposition, his long experience, and by no means last or least, his ardent and proven zeal in their Majesties' service.' What think you now, eh? Will there not be a whirlwind rattling the loose bricks from these Dutchmen's chimneys, presently?"

A few days later, the incautious mariner handed over to Steenie a letter from his powerful friend in court, commending the management of some business committed to his hands. Of more interest to the junker than the contents was a glimpse which he caught of an earl's coronet on the seal, and the name "Richard Coote" signed at the foot of the page.

Once having made a confidant of Steenie, thereafter the captain's talk was of nothing but of chases, of captures, of hair-breadth escapes, of bold adventures, of bloody combats, of honor, of glory, of endless booty, until the junker went home at night with his head swimming and his heart aflame.

Although no definite agreement had been made, it somehow came to be understood between the two that Steenie was to join the expedition under his new friend in whatsoever capacity was best suited to him.

Meantime Madam Van Cortlandt had not been

blind to the new intimacy formed by her son. There had been much of late in the junker's behavior to fix her attention, perhaps to modify her views. It is not impossible that riper reflection may have shaken her confidence in the lasting efficacy of sea-air as a nepenthe. Here was a surprising tonic found in mere human companionship; for the bracing influence on her son of the stranger's society was only too apparent.

Idle curiosity as to the secret of their sudden intimacy doubtless first moved Madam to study the stranger, but Steenie's guarded answers as to the man's character and profession must have whetted the spirit of inquiry, for one day, having a good opportunity, — she chanced to be sitting on the stoop when he came to ask for Steenie, — she made bold to engage Kidd in conversation.

It was with the weather and divers such humdrum topics they began. The captain's intelligent talk and well-bred air plainly scored a point in his favor.

"My son seems to find much content in your company, captain," said the lady presently, coming to closer quarters.

"No more, I dare swear, than I do in his, Madam."

"He is not used to take up so readily with new acquaintances," continued Madam, studying the details of the stranger's fine person with observant eye, "nor to carry the matter in so short time to such a pitch."

"Indeed!" said the imperturbable captain; "then must I esteem it a higher compliment that he has honored me out of the common."

Madam controlled a movement of uneasiness as one checks a sneeze, and cast a quick look at the speaker's

face, as though she had detected a subtle edge of mockery in his last speech.

"I fear he may obstruct your affairs by his frequent comings and long tarryings."

"Never a bit; I go about my business as if he were not there, and give him only such attention as my leisure warrants."

Madam's cough had a baffled expression, but she held none the less to her purpose.

"Your sojourn in New York is for some time yet?"

"It is in doubt."

"Surely it is not out of curiosity or pleasure-seeking you choose such an out-of-the-way corner of the world?"

"You divine excellently well."

The answer was accompanied by a low bow, and a smile lurked about the corners of the speaker's clean-cut mouth, at which a person less perfectly poised than the hearer might have been disturbed. It is due to the lady, however, to say that no sign of discomfiture troubled her composed face. With one definite point to make in the interview, she suddenly by a vigorous, straightforward thrust achieved it.

"'Tis our wish," she said, with what now seems like a touch of intuition, "to get our son settled to some useful course of life fitted to his station and to the newness of affairs in this province. We are concerned," she continued, fixing a steady and quite significant look upon her caller, "that he should not be led astray by projects unsuited to one of his training and sober prospects."

"Such views are most natural, I am sure," returned the stranger, with demure unconcern; "and it is safe to predict that your son will do you honor in whatsoever course of life he may enter upon."

Further talk was put an end to by Steenie's appearance. From her bench on the stoop Madam followed the two with an inscrutable look, as they went sauntering down the street.

But the gallant captain and his designs were not destined to serve much longer as mysteries. One fine morning all his pretty secrets took wing and flew out of the window like a flock of birds. And a prodigious flutter they caused. The whole province was thrown into a ferment, from the red-faced governor down in the fort, digesting in indignation the official announcement of his removal, to the widow Leisler and her rejoicing friends in their retirement at Albany, — even to Tryntje, interrupted in her task of plucking geese at the bouwerie by tidings that Rip had enlisted under the great Captain Kidd to go fight the pirates.

It was her husband who carried home the news to Madam Van Cortlandt. He was even more deliberate than usual in unfolding it, and it was only as an incidental and quite trivial detail that he mentioned the circumstance of a commission under the great seal being granted to Captain Kidd to make war upon the pirates. He did not remark Madam's startled look at the announcement. He was much too absorbed with the greater news of the change in the administration. Here, indeed, was food for thought; dark whispers had flown across the Atlantic about Lord Bellomont's views on the late revolution, and was it not common talk that Cobus Leisler and Abram Gouveneur were frequent and favored guests at his lordship's house in London?

"He is, then, held to be a man of weight and character?" asked Madam, abruptly, after a long silence.

"Yes, and rank and fortune to boot! What of

that? Think of the mischief he will make here by — ”

“ Tut, tut! I speak not of Bellomont.”

“ Who, then? ”

“ This Kidd.”

“ He? Surely. The king had a hand in his appointment. Divers other big lords support him besides Bellomont; he is held to be a man of honor, withal, and well fitted for the enterprise.”

The worshipful ex-mayor, having dismissed the incident, returned to the main theme; he seemed not at all to note his wife's inattention, as he maundered on in gloomy forebodings as to the effect of this new change of the administration.

Madam, meantime, was busy with forebodings of her own, the result of which duly appeared.

Next morning, at breakfast, her attention was fixed upon Steenie; she cast frequent looks askance at his grave and preoccupied face, in a way that made it clear he was the object of her thoughts. It presently came out that she had been making up her mind as to her course of action with regard to him. It was as straightforward and as lacking in finesse as usual.

“ So the mystery is cleared up at last,” she said suddenly, addressing him.

Steenie looked up inquiringly.

“ Your friend the captain's momentous business, which has been kept so close. He is set to catch the pirates, it seems.”

The junker flushed, rather at the tone than at the words.

“ 'Tis no great office, that of a thief-catcher,” continued Madam, in a tone of cold depreciation. “ One

would think a man of honor and spirit loath to undertake it."

"'T is a work of great hardship and danger, which few would dare undertake, and which only a man of great courage and skill could hope to accomplish," answered Steenie, with warmth.

"Poh!" retorted Madam, with over-emphasized contempt, "these wretches are like other vermin; one has but to turn upon them. The vulgar skipper of a fishing-ketch is hero enough for this business, give him but money and countenance."

Steenie made no answer; experience had not been wasted upon him. Silence, moreover, was a policy peculiarly trying to his mother; it was her own especial weapon, which she well knew how to use with varied and formidable effect.

Madam, however, having taken her part with advisement, pursued it with energy. She continued upon every occasion to belittle the captain and his undertaking, underrate the potential fruits of his success, magnify its perils, and deny that glory or profit could be a possible outcome of the enterprise.

Her son's continued and ominous silence at last warned the anxious mother that she might be making a mistake; whereupon she abruptly changed her tactics. Early one morning she went over and laid the whole matter before Dominie Selyns, who had seen Steenie grow up, and had in a way some influence with him.

Long and intimate acquaintance with Madam Van Cortlandt may have led the shrewd old dominie to take her very positive statements with regard to Captain Kidd with a sly pinch of salt; but he knew too that she was afflicted with neither sentiment nor im-

agination, that she was shrewd and observing; and when she said that Steenie was in a desperate state of mind on account of some fresh quarrel with "that worthless hussy who for years had made such a fool of him," he recognized the extreme probability of the rest of the story,—that the disappointed swain was preparing to run away to sea with Captain Kidd, and that they were keeping secret the hour of their departure in order to prevent any interference on the part of family or friends.

The dominie comforted his visitor by promising to take the matter in hand at once. And so he did. Fortunately, he met Steenie on the street in the captain's company, and made that fact the excuse for a long talk with the junker, in which, having in vain sought to make him confess his engagement with the bold sailor, he plumply taxed him with it.

Steenie was too truthful to deny the charge, but he obstinately kept silent during the dominie's long homily, and parted from the good man without having bound himself by any promise.

The dominie, however, was too deeply interested to desist from his purpose. Moreover, chance acquainted him with the very fact he most wanted to know. The night following his talk with Steenie, the door of his study was rudely burst open, and a bare-headed little figure, in great excitement, appeared upon the threshold.

"Oh! Oh! Oh, moord! Go ye to him, dominie! Go! go ye! he'll not heed me—ugh! ugh! he had the door shut in my face! Go, dominie, dear man! Go and stop him!"

"What, is it you, Tryntje, making such an outcry? Shame, shame! Hush! Sit you down and

take your breath! So — there! Now what is it ails you?"

"He — ugh! ugh! he will take my Rip off to fight the pirates!"

"Who will do this?"

"Yonder man they — call captain."

"When did he this?"

"They found him at — at Annetje Litschoe's pot-house — ugh! ugh! He was filled with the brande-wyn and knew no better — ugh! — and so bound himself to go."

"Poh! dry your eyes, good woman; when he gets his senses, he may say 't was all a mistake."

"That will he not; he must needs go, he says, being bound; he will hear no reason."

"Where is he now?"

"I locked him in the barn; but he breaks down the door, lets all the cattle to run wild, and follows me till he turns off to Vrouw Litschoe's, where he is safe enough till they want him, never fear! Oh, dominie, go ye to yonder man and bid him leave my Rip behind. 'T is but a drunken sot, as ye know, and no good to fight pirates. Go, good dominie, tell him this! 'T is the last chance, for they're away this very night at the turn of the tide!"

"What say you, woman, — to-night?" exclaimed the dominie, starting to his feet.

"This very night, I say!"

Without a word the good man opened a clothes-press behind him, and began fumbling among the pegs for his hat and cloak.

"Ye will go?"

"Yes."

"The blessed Lord above go with ye!"

Calling a slave to bring a lantern, the dominie turned upon the threshold for a last word.

"Get you down to Vrouw Litschoe's and hold fast to your man, and I will do what I can with yonder captain."

As good as his word, the dominie lost no time in making his way to the little house in Liberty Street.

Having been shown in, he found the household in a state of confusion which tended to confirm Tryntje's statement.

Kidd, although very busy, received with politeness his visitor, who, on his side, lost not a moment in coming to the point and making a most earnest plea on behalf of both his petitioners. The captain listened with attention, but seemed not much impressed with the urgency of either case.

"How, then, is his Majesty's work to be done, if everybody is excused upon so slight a pretext?"

"The ties of family, at least, should be respected."

"What think you becomes of the expedition if I give ear to this plea? There is my own dear wife above, crying her eyes out this moment, and my innocent babe asleep in her crib, never dreaming her father is going to run away in the night."

The dominie, although somewhat staggered by this personal argument, renewed his appeal, however, and with such eloquence and persistence that Kidd at last very reluctantly gave his promise to leave both men behind.

"'T is easy enough in the case of Rip, but you will find young Van Cortlandt hard to manage," said the dominie, warningly, as he rose to go.

The captain smiled, and said only, —

"You have my promise."

“It is enough.”

Coming out together into the hall, the two found poor Mrs. Kidd sobbing at the foot of the stairs.

“Look you here, dominie,” said the husband, putting his arm tenderly about the little woman, “turn-about, as you know, is fair play; if aught of ill befalls me on this business, here is one will stand in need of a friend and a comforter.”

“And that she shall find in me so long as I live,” answered the dominie, heartily. “And so, good-by to you. Remember to temper justice with mercy in dealing with those rogues, and may God further and bless you *in every good undertaking!*”

The grateful fervor with which this qualified blessing was received came back to the dominie with startling vividness in the light of after-events.

As the person in greatest distress at the moment, the dominie, on leaving Kidd's door, bethought him first of Tryntje. Accordingly, he went straight to Vrouw Litschoe's, where he found husband and wife seated at a little table in the tap-room. Rip, greatly flattered by his wife's extreme and unexpected agitation at the prospect of losing him, was holding forth grandiloquently between his cups, while the little huysvrouw's reddened eyes were fixed so steadfastly upon her spouse that she failed to see her pastor.

“Zoo! zoo! Never ye cry, my treasure! I may come back, after all — though — hic — they say 't is an awful, aw-hic-ful business, going to fight pirates — they — they 're bloody-minded wretches, that sort! One falling into their clutches may r-roast — hic — alive, or boil in oil, or — or — hic — be cut into bait for fishes. Zoo! zoo! Never cry, I say! Annetje, good vrouw, see ye not my mug is empty? I may

come back to ye without arms — who knows? — or w-walking on one leg — ”

“ Never ! I should die to see ye like that ! ” sobbed the little woman. “ Oh, Rip — Rip, I say, ye will not have the heart to go and leave me ! ”

“ His Maj-majesty sends for me — he will none but me — there is — hic — need of my arm to put down these villains ! ”

“ No — no — no, man, I ’ll not hear of it. Ye must not go. Would ye leave me to live alone ? Stay by me, Rip — stay, my man ! I cannot part with ye ; ’t will break my — ”

The impassioned appeal was cut short by a sight of the dominie standing at her elbow. Starting up, she cried with frantic eagerness, —

“ Wel zoo ? ”

“ Your wish is granted. ”

“ The captain — he will leave him to me — he will not take my Rip ? ”

Before he could frame a word in reply, the delighted woman had read the answer in his eyes, and seizing his hand, she covered it with kisses, pouring forth upon him the while an eloquent but incoherent medley of thanks and blessings. In the midst of it all, as it chanced, up came Vrouw Litschoe with a smoking glass of grog. To the amazement of the good dominie, Tryntje snatched it from the hands of the stout landlady and flung it violently to the floor, crying, —

“ Get ye gone with your stuff ! Get ye gone, or I ’ll give ye a taste of my nails ! Hold ! do ye hear ? ” she continued, turning sharply upon her husband.

“ Ei ! ” grunted Rip, stupefied at the sudden change in tone and manner.

"Do ye hear, I say? Ye'll get no more to drink to-night, and ye'll go home with me!"

"Zoo?"

"Come!"

"Ei?"

"Heard ye not what the dominie says? Ye are left behind. They'll not take ye to fight pirates."

"Umph!"

"Get ye home, I say! Will ye wait to be haled forth?"

"M-my treasure —"

"If ye go not upon the minute, so true as I live, I tear the roof down upon your head."

Overawed and bewildered, the new recruit suffered himself to be half-led, half-propelled, from the house by his energetic helpmeet, who, having once more fervently thanked the dominie for his kindness, started homeward with her lumbering spouse in tow.

Later, the same evening, Steenie, awaiting at home a private message which was to warn him of the sailing of the ship, received in its stead the following note: —

MY DEAR VAN CORTLANDT, — Never pass judgment on a man's action till you know whereof you judge; nor ever be quite sure of anything in this world save what comes through your five senses. All of which is but preface to saying that I have gone away and left you in the lurch; and though you may never know the reason why I do this, be sure I am not such a fool as to do it without one.

So now vent all your spleen upon me! Rave! Curse! Exhaust billingsgate! Consign me and the expedition to the devil, if you will! But, when all is over, and your blood is cooled, call up some tender thought of me,

and consider that this scurvy trick I am playing you — and much against my will, I swear — may prove the one act in our short and sweet acquaintance which will some day earn for me your eternal gratitude.

Your obedient servant and loving friend,

WILLIAM KIDD.

XXXI.

FROM the sweeping confiscation of her husband's estate Vrouw Leisler succeeded in saving certain valuable chattels, — a part of her own dowry, — and upon the modest income thence derived she was still able to live in comparative comfort.

While on a visit to Albany with her youngest daughter, she was offered by some well-to-do kinsfolk there the use of a small house, rent free, and gratefully caught at the chance of calling together again her scattered family. Accordingly, Mary, now a widow and destitute, was straightway summoned to come to her, and Hester recalled from her prolonged visit at Nieuw Utrecht.

The two sisters set forth to make the long journey together in a ketch loaded with household stuff for their new home. What with contrary winds and their heavy cargo, however, they made such slow progress that, upon arriving at Esopus, they were fain to quit the vessel and make the last fifty miles on horseback.

Having as their only attendant an old family chattel named Congo, — a part of the above-named dowry, — they accepted with gratitude an offer of escort from an honest citizen of Esopus, going up to Albany to trade with the Indians.

To Mary, whose experience in travelling had thus far been limited to occasional trips to Seawanacky, the journey was full of interest. Much of the

way lay through the virgin forest, where the primal charm of spring-time still lurked in the air and ambushed in woody recesses, and everything seemed bursting into riotous life. Knowing well her sister's delight in all this, Vrouw Milborne noted with much perplexity that Hester soon lapsed from her first mood of enthusiasm into long silences and fits of abstraction, in which she was constantly falling behind to escape the talk of her companions. On encamping for the night, moreover, when Mary, awakened in the small hours by some forest sound, started from her bed of fragrant hemlock-boughs, she discovered Hester sitting with her back against a big pine, staring absently at the camp-fire. The care-taking instinct aroused in the young matron, she studied Hester more carefully next day ; but once having satisfied herself that her sister's health was not in danger, she paid no heed to so sentimental a matter as the state of her spirits.

At the end of the second day the party arrived at Albany. The sisters gazed with natural curiosity at this notable little town, of which all their lives they had heard so much, recalling with new interest the tales told by their grandfather, of Rensselaerwyck and the Indian wars. It was Rensselaerwyck no more, although the patroon still held feudal sway over the town and miles of fertile country round about.

Their first feeling was one of disappointment in its size, as upon issuing from the woods, it rose unexpectedly before them. Truly, it was a very bit of a town. Bound around so trim and smug with its high stockade, it looked at a distance not unlike a clumsy top with its point in the air. Upon a high hill to the westward stood the fort, inclosing the first

rude Stadthuys, and commanding a view of the whole surrounding region, while adown the gentle declivity the town itself, consisting of two or three hundred buildings, more or less, sloped to the river's edge.

The suppaen-bell was just ringing as the tired travellers passed through the southern gate nearest the river. Within, the town looked even smaller than without, and more droll, yet had, withal, an attractive air of homeliness. Most of the small story-and-a-half houses, with their scalloped gables, like a modern beauty's crimps, turned towards the highway, fronted upon blooming gardens and grateful patches of green, in which already the tulips were beginning to flaunt their gaudy pennons. There seemed to be but three streets of any size, and at the crossing of the two larger of these, Jonkers and Handelaer, plump, as it were, in the midst of the highway, stood Dominie Dellijs's church, a square stone structure, with its peaked roof ending in a bell-tower.

Here taking leave of their companion with many thanks, the sisters inquired the way, and soon found out the little nook where Vrouw Leisler and her youngest daughter were already busy setting up their household gods. They were received with open arms; the good vrouw, indeed, moved by divers natural recollections, fairly wept at seeing her long-scattered family gathered once more about the little supper-table.

Within a day or two the ketch arrived with the furniture, and thereupon nothing was thought of but getting the house to rights. In a Dutch household this involved an endless deal of scouring, scrubbing, and polishing, in which, with the others, Hester lent an active hand. Her attention thus constantly taken

up by petty cares, she had no time for wandering thoughts, the rather that at night so much good honest toil demanded its wage of sound sleep.

The bustle was soon over; things were arranged to give, so far as might be, a suggestion of the old home in the Strand, and the little household was ordered upon a scale suitable to its modest resources. The routine once established, the work was an easy matter; it was shared, as a matter of course, between Mary and her mother, — both born housewives, — aided by old Congo, a most accomplished factotum.

Thus, for the early part of the day, Hester was left to her own resources. They proved to be meagre. She passed the time wandering, chance-led, about the town, roaming for miles along the river-side, or pacing her own chamber under the ridge-pole. Her face was tense with calculation, like that of one busied with a momentous problem.

At the long afternoon sessions of sewing, spinning, or mat-weaving, however, she made one of the home circle, where the widowed mother and daughter, in strophe and antistrophe, reviewing every smallest detail of their common tragedy, exalted the virtues of their lost spouses to a pitch which might well have caused the rank and file of the saints' calendar to look to their halos.

This talk, in which she rarely joined save to correct some date or matter of detail, had nevertheless a marked effect upon Hester. She listened with unwearied attention, and always with an air of conviction. At times her face cleared, as if something said had afforded her a present solace, and once or twice she started up and paced the floor with a long-drawn sigh of relief.

The coming to town of so notable a person as Leisler's widow made a stir. The deep aversion in which her husband had been held by the majority of the townsfolk told strongly against his family, who were received for the most part with cold civility. Dominie Dellius, despite some wrangling with the commander during his life, failed not in the Christian duty of waiting upon his family, which he did in due time, tendering them the hospitality of his church. Vrouw Leisler accepted the courtesy with gratitude, and on the following Lord's Day took Hester with her to the morning service.

The interior of the building reminded them of their own church at home, with its octagon pulpit fetched over from Holland, its stoves perched upon stilts, its narrow, straight-backed pews, and its bell-rope dangling in the middle aisle. Two features combined to give it an air of cheerfulness, wanting to the rather gloomy sanctuary of Dominie Selyns: the bright blue paint which tinted the ceiling and gallery, and the memorial window of the Van Rensselaers, which illuminated the northeast corner.

Seated in a wall-pew, their strange faces were an object of easy scrutiny to most of the congregation. Schooled, however, by severe experience to composure under public notice, they took refuge in rapt attention to the service.

But human nerves and muscles are rebellious; it must be a strict guard they will not run; and so it chanced that Hester, opening her eyes, calm with devout attention, at the end of the long prayer, turned them unconsciously upon a striking personage sitting near at hand across the aisle. She started, and barely stifled an outcry. Despite every effort at self-

control, her agitation showed clearly in her face. Her first look of startled astonishment quickly gave place to one of painful and guilty confusion under the cold, searching glance her incautious movement had brought upon her.

Nothing was more natural than that Madam Van Cortlandt, born Gertryd Schuyler, should be visiting her old home. To Hester, knowing nothing of the cause, and profoundly occupied with a certain problem not yet definitely settled, the lady's sudden apparition seemed of special and threatening significance.

The long service passed in a series of sounds and movements signifying nothing. Not until, freed from the homeward-thronging congregation, Hester found herself answering at random her mother's strictures upon the sermon, did she quite recover her composure.

This little incident, thrown in but as a straw to show the current, had a result out of all proportion to its seeming importance. It is curiously significant of Hester's mental state that this simple appearance of Steenie's mother should have had the effect of quite unsettling her; of violently turning her aside from the comfortable conviction towards which she had been fast gravitating, and setting her again at work upon the old problem.

As, however, driven by a restless feeling, she went roaming again to get space to think in, as she listened daily to her mother's and Mary's reminiscences, insensibly the old influences did their work, and slowly, gradually, brought back her routed peace.

Meantime the dead monotony of life in the frontier town, which had long since showed its effect upon her younger sister's spirits, began to tell upon her own. Cut off from Catalina's affectionate companion-

ship, far from the bustling metropolis, out of reach of friends with whom, all her life, she had been in daily communication, ostracized by the community in which they lived, social life seemed reduced well-nigh to its lowest terms.

The one great distraction was reading Cobus's letters. The days on which they came were marked by a feverish excitement. Filled as they were with the bustle and stir of London life, with glimpses of court splendor, with accounts of the plots, machinations, or open hostility of their enemies, and with evidences of the slow but certain progress of their great cause, what wonder that they were read with breathless interest, that they were re-read and read again, and discussed point by point for weeks afterwards in family conclave!

But for these, one day was as like as possible to another. It was almost a relief, one morning, when old Congo came in and asked for leave to go the Pingster feast. Hester and Francina exhausted their ingenuity in tricking the old man out, and he went off with a fine strut, fluttering his ribbons, and charging them not to fail to join the crowd of lookers-on at Pingster Hill.

In Congo's absence Hester went, that afternoon, to answer a knock at the door.

"You!"

She stepped back into the shadow of the doorway to hide the blush caused by her own joyous outcry, while Barent's beaming gratification at this unexpected welcome was somewhat dampened by the look of chill demureness with which, the next moment, she bade him come in.

By the rest of the family he was received in the

heartiest way. Aside from the fact that he was Cobus's friend and a special favorite of her late husband, he was endeared to Vrouw Leisler by many kindly offices during the dark days of her affliction. He was doubly welcome now as the bearer of funds collected by Dr. Staats on her account, of household goodies from her daughter Walters, and, more than all, of cheering news regarding their prospects abroad.

More than once, in the telling of all this, the visitor cast a furtive eye at Hester, sitting with grave face over her work; but he was wise enough to show no consciousness of her growing interest in the rapid cross-fire of question and answer, until at last, quite forgetting herself, she was led on to take an active part in it.

He went home to his own family for the night, and they parted quite in the old way, without consciousness on her part. Next morning, when he appeared, she was about setting forth with Francina to visit the Pingster feast. He joined them as a matter of course, explaining, as they went along, his own great delight in the festival when a child, and his intimate knowledge of the vicinity and its ceremonies.

It was the second and most important day of the festival, which usually lasted a week. All along the way the air was filled with the holiday clamor of groups of children, both white and black, under the care of some gray-haired old aunty or buxom young wench, all alike bedizened with cheap jewelry and gay streamers, and decked out with branches of lilac and cherry blossoms.

Arrived at the hill, now long since swept away by the levelling spirit of a later day, they found the grounds laid out in the form of an oblong square,

surrounded on three sides by rude booths and tents, and open only at the eastern end for entrance and exit. Here, given over to the frolic spirit of the hour, swarmed the whole slave population of the town, together with a plentiful sprinkling of Indians, feathered and blanketed, otherwise easily to be distinguished by their stolid gravity amid the effervescent jollity of the negroes, like notes of discord in music artfully put in to accentuate the harmony.

Pausing before the entrance to the grounds, Barent, with a sly twinkle in his eye, said they must by no means go in until they had exhausted the outlying features of the spectacle. Whereupon he led them around to the rear of the booths, where were several side-shows in active operation. Before one tent a negro, loudly beating a drum, advertised the tricks of a conjurer; in the next a dancing bear was performing to a tune ground out by a monkey on a hurdy-gurdy; while in a third a two-headed pig was exhibited as the greatest living attraction of the age.

The cicerone's evident delight in these wonders showed that he had by no means outgrown his boyish tastes. Indeed, the girls might have had hard work to drag him away but for a sudden shout which arose from the grounds, proclaiming something of interest in that direction.

"Haste! haste!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "'Tis the king, — the Pingster king!"

By dint of running they arrived at the entrance just in time to witness the approach of his Majesty. No Roman conqueror in triumphal car ever bore himself with loftier port. Few, indeed, among mere conquerors and potentates have been so blessed by kindly Nature, or furnished forth in greater pomp of awe-

striking haberdashery, withal, than was the Pingster king.

A gold-laced cocked hat was perched upon his snow-white head; his tall, spare figure was draped in a scarlet coat, which hung to his very heels, while his buck-skin breeches, blue stockings, and silver-buckled shoes flashed in and out as his wide-flapping coat-skirts yielded to his stately tread.

Loud cries rent the air; his loyal subjects, indeed, nearly shouted themselves hoarse in salvos of welcome, as the king strode on and took his place at the upper end of the square.

Motioning to his aids, he gave orders for the revels to begin. Amidst a hush of expectation a solitary musician came forward and stationed himself near the royal seat. He was furnished with a grotesque instrument called an eel-pot, which looked like a big, hollow, wooden cask covered by a tightly drawn sheep-skin. Although not at all an impressive-looking instrument, the eel-pot, in the hands of its skilled performer, speedily showed orchestral resources quite adequate to the occasion.

At a sign from the king, the musician, an agile young negro, leaped astride his instrument, and beating with his naked hands upon the sounding sheep-skin, sang in cadences, now dolefully prolonged like the wind souging in the tree-tops, now tense, sharp, and ringing like a dithyrambic chorus, the uncouth refrain, "Hi-a bomba bomba."

Old eyes glistened and dusky bosoms swelled again with remembrances of the wild rhythm of youthful dances on Guinean plain or Loango shore. A drumming of feet, a waving of hands, a nodding of the head, and a swaying of the whole body were the early

symptoms of a purely physical intoxication, a nerve delirium, which this strange music speedily produced in these susceptible tropical organizations.

Suddenly the king, seizing a buxom wench in his arms, set off in a swift course about the open space which had been cleared for dancing. Directly a score of waiting couples followed suit. With long, dizzying whirl they went, with high skip and jump, with picked and fantastic steps, each and every movement seeming to adapt itself without difficulty to the resounding "Hi-a bomba bomba." Round and round, up and down, back and forth, to and fro, in swift and swifter course the dancers flew, filled by the pursuing "Hi-a bomba bomba" with a supernal vigor, with a wild abandon rising by degrees to true bacchanalian frenzy, and culminating in utter physical exhaustion.

The spectacle was not new to any of them; and Hester, after a little, growing weary, turned to go, but Francina, glad of any diversion in their humdrum life, wanted to stay. Accordingly, she was left in charge of Congo, while Hester and Barent sauntered away towards home.

Passing the fort, they loitered along Jonkers Street to the corner of Pearl. There, looking down the quiet little by-way, they caught a glimpse of the smiling outer world through the open city-gate at the end of the street.

The junker stopped, and with a wistful look at Hester expressed a wish to visit some of his old boyish haunts in the woods and fields. To his unbounded surprise she quietly assented.

He studied her askance as they walked along, and any undue elation he may have felt presently abated. With the new tone of kindness and easy-going com-

panionship she had adopted there appeared again the old trait of unconsciousness, the habit of talking to him as if thinking aloud. His look of humble appreciation even for this cavalier treatment had a touch of pathos, and despite her wandering attention he went on patiently recounting his homely tales of boyish pranks and gambols connected with well-known spots, as they passed them by.

After a long walk they came to the river, and upon a high bank overlooking the windings of the noble stream sat down to take breath. Here the fancy seized Hester to ask about her friends in New York and talk about their old life there, whereupon by and by it came out that Barent had no thought of going back.

With a languid word of surprise very significant of her interest in the matter, she asked the reason.

"Things are no longer as they were, yonder," he answered, simply; "there is little chance there now-a-days for one like me."

"How like you?"

"With no fortune or hope of inheritance."

"Industry may supply the lack."

"And no gifts of nature."

"Men make shift oftentimes to get on without them," she answered, letting the self-accusation pass unchallenged in a way so pointed that nothing but the junker's triple-plated armor of modesty saved him from mortification.

"One must have strong friends there, and I have none."

"How then made you such good advance as it seemed at first?"

"Because of your father."

She started at the unexpected answer.

"'T was he pushed me on. He was ever a good friend to me."

Oddly enough, her face grew troubled while listening to this generous tribute.

"But if he had lived he would have found me out. He held me at more than I am worth. Ah," sighing, "far more he did, and treated me as he might a son."

A flush crept over the listener's face, and the gathering cloud deepened and settled there. After some minutes of silence she stole a look at her companion; he was absorbed in his reminiscences. Whatever emotions had been awakened by his words, it was plain he had spoken them in all simplicity.

For a long time they sat thus, he talking on in his quiet fashion, and she studying, as it seemed, with a new interest every detail of his ugly face and graceless figure.

"But what better hope have you of doing something in this out-of-the-world corner?" she asked, breaking the silence at last with a blunt question.

"I can go on here with my father's handicraft; I am well skilled in it now. He is old and much broken, and has need of help."

"So!"

"I can be of comfort, too, to my mother and the young ones whiles they are in need of guidance; 't is all I am like to be good for."

The calm patience of the speaker's tone and his air of unconscious resignation seemed in some way to touch his hearer. She looked afflicted, and, rising, she demanded to be conducted home.

If heretofore Barent had been puzzled in his rela-

tions with Hester, he was thrown into perfect bewilderment by her later demeanor. For many days after their walk, she treated him with an attention and consideration approaching tenderness. The astonished junker rubbed his eyes. His own attitude had been steadfastly maintained,—a simple kindness, a familiarity without presumption. Evidently he had accepted as final that answer spoken long ago in the graveyard, and no word or look had since escaped him showing any hope of its amendment; but now as day by day he was accorded a more cordial welcome, was greeted with a smile instead of the old grave or indifferent salutation, as he was even at times chided for absence or tardiness when he failed to appear daily and regularly, long-choked-up sources of emotions showed signs of freshening life. There were evidences of a deep stir within him. His aspect of patient resignation gave place to a wistful look,—a look of hoping and fearing, a look of trembling anticipation.

In this mood, no word or movement of Hester's but seemed to him of significance; after every interview he puzzled in his plodding way over her speeches and her silences, not always with success. He was destined to further mystification before enlightenment.

One day, at his request, she went for a sail on the river, Francina accompanying them. Whether exhilarated by the unwonted exercise, by the cool bracing air, or the beauty of the scene, Hester showed herself unusually light-hearted.

Barent, seated at the helm, watched her with undisguised delight. In the flood-tide of her hilarity she went the length of rallying him.

"It is clear to me now why you would forsake

New York and come to make your home here in the wilderness."

"How is that?"

"See him, Francina! See the rogue! How innocent he is, is not he? Well, well!"

"Out with it, — come!"

"Would one now ever suspect him? Ah, how oft and often have I stood in need of such assurance! Mark it, Francina! You may never see the like again!"

"Come, now, I say," pleaded the helmsman, with a foolish look, "I cry for mercy. I feel like a very villain, and am pricking all over with a sense of guiltiness, set upon with such sharp looks. What is it you have found out? What are you at?"

"'T is no wonder, sure, you feel guilty."

"I redden only that I am treated like a rogue; as I live, I can think of nothing done to be ashamed of."

"I said not you should be ashamed."

"So!"

"Oh, no, ~~that~~ will you not, I'll be bound, for all you have been so sly."

"I follow you only as one gropes in the dark."

"There is light enough for others to see, never fear."

"Will you out with it or no?"

"Francina, what think *you* would make a man come away from New York to live in the wilderness?"

"I cannot think of anything," returned Francina, simply, and with only a half-interest in the talk, "unless it be a sweetheart."

"There, there! it was not I that said it; 'tis noted of all the world, you see!"

The junker blushed crimson, but the beaming, flat-

tered look he cast upon Hester showed how much more the fact of the accusation than the substance of it had to do with his confusion.

In this merry mood the party brought up to the dock at the foot of Handelaer Street, and, filing through the gate, found the town in a tumult.

The bell in the little church was ringing with might and main, guns were thundering from the fort, while Jonkers Street was thronged with citizens hurrying to the Stadthuys.

Inquiring the meaning of the commotion, they learned that an express had just arrived with great news from New York.

Following in the wake of the crowd, they climbed the hill, and soon found themselves wedged in among a mass of excited people who filled the narrow space within the fort. The secret was soon out; Lord Bello-mont, the new governor, had arrived some weeks before in New York, and his long-delayed commission was being read from the Stadthuys steps.

However much the general public may have been startled at this news, the Leislars and their friends, long before forewarned, had awaited it with ill-disguised impatience.

Naturally, Barent, who knew well how much this event imported to the family, broke forth into congratulations, under his breath, to the sisters as soon as they got clear of the crowd. "T is great news, — great news. 'T is the beginning of the end. At last we shall have justice. At last there is good hope you will get your rights again."

In the midst of his speech they arrived at the corner of the little side-street which led to his father's house.

"I pray you," said Hester, breaking in abruptly

upon his eloquence, "do not give yourself the trouble of going with us any further. We are greatly obliged for the favor of the sail, and shall hope to find some means of giving you a like pleasure."

Her face was pale, her tone almost hard, her manner constrained to the last degree. The old bovine look crept into the junker's face as he listened, and he stood as if benumbed by a sudden blow.

XXXII.

THE following letter from Madam Van Cortlandt to her husband explains itself:—

ALBANY, 10th May, 1698.

MY BELOVED HUSBAND,—I am much concerned to know how affairs go on since B——t's accession. His l'dsh'p's coming, if all that's said be true, is not likely to make for the benefit of some we wot of. There's an end once and for all of a certain junker's chances. What next is to be undertaken we will consider of when we meet. The plan writ of in my last with such commendation, that he come hither to bear brother John company in his forthcoming embassy to the Five Nations, must no longer be thought of; for only last Lord's Day morning, as I sat at ease in church, who should pop up before me but that Leisler hussy! and upon inquiry I find the whole brood is settled down here. Make shift rather to send him down to Lysbeth's for two or three weeks' shooting, until we hit upon a sufficient pretext for dispatching him to Holland. . . .

Your faithful, loving wife,

GERTRYD.

It was in accordance with the hint above given that Steenie was forthwith posted off to Vlacktebos. He received the hint from his father with instant favor. He was a zealous sportsman, Seawanacky abounded in game, there was nothing to keep him at home, and the suggestion of a possible voyage to Holland upon business of moment was a prospect

tangible and alluring enough to rob the future of vagueness, life of aimlessness, and justify present idling.

Cousin Lysbeth welcomed him with her usual heartiness, but directly became aware of a change in him which perplexed her not a little. What had come over the ingenuous junker? Where had he picked up that hard, disagreeable way of talking, and that laugh without a touch of mirth to it? Shrewd as she was, the good huysvrouw could never be quite sure whether he was in jest or earnest; and for the matter of that, many of his jests — if they were jests — she did not at all understand.

“So we have a new governor, it seems,” she said, as they sat on the stoop after supper.

“I believe you, cousin, and we made the welkin ring at his coming.”

“How so?”

“Nothing less than four full barrels of gunpowder could avail to bruit the matter to the world.”

“And all well enough; ’t is fitting he should be received with honor,” remarked the dame, who had an hereditary but well-regulated love for parade.

“Humph, yes! In that respect ’t was small measure. Nay, as I think on it, ’t was niggardly. They should have burned the other two. Would you believe, now, they had two good barrels left, saved with old-granny prudence against an attack by the Indians? To such things are we come!”

“But his Excellency is of higher rank, ’t is said, than any before sent out to us.”

“So you would have sworn from the banquet; the like was never seen here; only your earls and lordships are born with stomachs for such feasts.”

"What had they then so fine?" asked cousin Lysbeth, eagerly, with a true huysvrouw interest.

"Everything that walks or creeps, or swims or flies,—venison, beef, mutton, pork, veal, lamb, sausages —"

"Meat to every man's liking, and none too much for the occasion."

"—turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, grouse, and quail —"

"Ei! ei!" exclaimed cousin Lysbeth, in protestation.

"I swear to you! — was I not one of them? — together with pasties, puddings, cakes without number, and wines without stint."

"And how many to eat?"

"Everybody worth counting in the town; a hundred and fifty at least, — all bowing and smirking and lordshipping with might and main, Mayor De Peyster at the head."

"What manner of man is his Excellency?"

"Not a woman in the land but will say we had never such a governor before."

"Humph!"

"For besides that, in stature and port, he outdoes De Peyster himself, he comes dangerously up to Solomon in glory of raiment."

"So? He should make a show in keeping with his office, but 'tis pity if he have no more sense than to overdo the matter."

"Sense! Never fear. You have not more yourself. See what a great opinion I hold of the man. He has a will of his own, too. Heigho!" He interrupted himself with one of those laughs the honest dame liked not to hear. "Is it not enough to set a

dog laughing, cousin, to see them yonder hugging and cossetting, when in three weeks they will be snarling and spitting like cats?"

"For me," said Vrouw Wickoff, gravely, "I see no laughing matter in it; 't is time we had an end of quarrelling and bickering, and some heed was given to the good of the province."

"The good of the province!" repeated the junker, with another laugh, louder and harder than before. "What, pray, mean you by that fine phrase, cousin? What is the good of the province but the good of Claes and Rip and Jan many times multiplied? Who cares for Claes and Rip and Jan singly? Not a mother's son but themselves. See you? 'T is every one for himself. The province is but a name which everybody writes on his banner to serve his turn."

The dame did not answer directly. She sat for several minutes studying her kinsman as his roving eyes gave her opportunity.

"I hope, at any rate," she began after a while, "his Excellency will let bygones be bygones, and rake up no old bones of contention."

"Why, know you not 't is for that precisely he has come?"

"What?"

"To put down the pirates."

"'T is high time, too."

"And put up the Leislerians."

"Ei?"

"For which these worthy merchants who have been feasting him are expected to supply the money."

"God grant they may never be such fools."

The junker laughed long and loud.

"See you there, who would be bickering now?"

Ah, cousin Lysbeth, 't is as I thought ; were you a man, there 'd be no such roistering bickerer in the land."

" 'T is no bickering to make a stand against letting loose a lot of vipers upon us."

" Why should they not be let loose, tell me ? Why should they not have their ups after being trod so long in the mire ?"

" 'T is the place for them," retorted Vrouw Wickoff, stoutly ; " they 're not to be trusted."

A look of demure gratification gleamed in Steenie's eye, as he watched his sober kinswoman take fire.

" Give them power again and they 'd cast the whole province into an uproar," she continued, quite unconscious of being baited.

" They are all of one flesh and blood ; 't is but fair they should have their chance with the rest," went on the junker, casting about for material to keep up the flame.

" Go get you to bed !" cried cousin Lysbeth, suddenly awaking to the situation, " and to-morrow let me find you in better sense !"

The first week of Steenie's stay in Vlacktebos passed without any event of note. He spent the days tramping the country with his dog and gun, to such good purpose that his cousin's larder was supplied to overflowing. It was, perhaps, on account of this embarrassment of riches that she suggested sharing his gifts with the begum, in return for her kindness of long ago.

Accordingly, on his way home one day he stopped at the Staats farm with a bagful of birds. The begum was not at home, so leaving his offering with a civil message, the junker turned away. Hardly had he

reached the highway, however, when he saw the lady approaching. Upon hearing his errand she overwhelmed him with thanks, and despite his excuses and bedraggled condition, by sheer insistence brought him back with her to supper.

At the entrance to the driveway she dismissed her palanquin, and loitered under the tall trees upon a pretext of pointing out the view.

"Here, if it please you, Mynheer, upon this knoll, — so — looking to the west. There is nothing, I suppose, stirring in town?"

"Nothing of moment," he answered, busied with the view.

"'T is strange, with the coming of a new governor."

"True, the new governor, — I quite forgot him."

"'T is because he goes on with things where his late Excellency dropped them," continued the lady, attentively studying his averted face.

"Not he."

"So?"

Directly the questioner's eye darkened with interest, but she turned away with excellent control, and occupied herself with the scenery.

"A little further to the right, Mynheer. The doctor says 'tis the best point for a view in all Nieuw Utrecht. Note the cliff yonder, glittering in the sunset; 'tis like the glories of the Taj-Mahal. 'Tis thought, then, his lordship will have other views than Governor Fletcher?"

"As different as dawn from dark, so goes the report."

"Yonder faint line you think the sky, Mynheer; 'tis no sky, but the sea itself. When the sun is overhead 'tis as blue as the sapphire on my hand."

Steenie, perhaps thinking of the last time he saw the sea in Nieuw Utrecht, was silent.

"What, then, called so loud for amendment in Governor Fletcher's doings?"

The junker replied with his new laugh, and his listener naturally stared.

"Pardon, Madam, your question is so innocent. Know you not New York is become a den of thieves under him? The merchants are all turned pirates and the officials are hand in glove with the rogues, till there's not an honest man left in authority to enforce his Majesty's noble Acts of Trade."

The new note struck by her visitor, accompanied by a certain slight recklessness of manner, clearly fell upon the lady's ear as a discord, for she flashed upon him a searching look.

"What think you of the story of Madam Fletcher's jewels?" he went on.

"Ei?" cried the begum, with an outburst of curiosity, all guards forgotten.

"Her late lamented Majesty, 'tis said, had nothing like them."

"I know nothing of all that!" interjected Madam, breathlessly.

"How comes it, tell me, they look so like to certain gems taken by pirate Tew from the Grand Mogul himself in the Indian Ocean?" asked the junker, with a look of mingled mockery and insinuation.

The begum did not speak, but she gazed at him as if every feature and limb had turned into bristling interrogation points.

"Again, how came Madam Bayard with that wondrous diamond, once worn by an Arabian princess, foully murdered, 'tis said, on the high seas?"

"What say you?"

"Let Minvielle too explain, if he can, the chest of Arabian gold pieces found under his bed, and Adolphe Philipse why he steals out in a ketch, under cover of night, to meet his father's merchantmen coming in from Madagascar."

Steenie laughed again in a way which seemed to bewilder and irritate his hearer.

"How think you now?" he went on, not blind to the impression he was making; "has not his new Excellency something to do to drive out the rogues and bring back those dear Leislerians?"

"He dare not venture upon that!"

"Why, know you not they are the only honest men left in the province?"

"What huysvrouw's tales are these, Mynheer?" cried the lady, with a sudden flash of anger.

"Such as are flying about the Stadthuys and buzzing in his new Excellency's ears. — So! this, then, is the view you speak of? 'Tis indeed a fine prospect of the land, but I see no water; perhaps 'tis because the sun blinds my eyes I cannot make it out."

The listener paid no heed to the attempted digression.

"And will he have new councillors?"

"Trust him for that!"

"Men of his own mind, men of the mind to bring back those" — she choked over the obnoxious word — "those others to power?"

Assuredly! Think you he would consort a minute with the rogues Fletcher had at his board?" questioned the junker, with another laugh.

Insensibly pressing closer to her guest, Madam low-

ered her high-pitched voice to a more confidential key.

"What say you? He will give back to the vrow and her children their goods and lands?"

"'T is so said."

"And take away—if he can—the guilt and disgrace?"

"God knows!"

Struck by the speaker's sudden sternness of tone, the begum stood looking at him with kindling eyes. There followed a moment of silence, in which she seemed busied with the form of her next question. Her trouble was lost. A cloud of dust arose on the highway, a sound of heavy trampling was heard, and the next minute a herd of young cattle came rushing and snorting down the road, with heads tossing and tails standing straight in air.

With a loud cry of terror the begum darted off towards the house, her soft draperies floating backward in the breeze of her own making.

Calling out vainly to reassure her, Steenie faced about to cover her retreat. But the danger was already over, and he stood staring at the cause of the stampede. Mounted on a colt, without saddle or bridle, her cap gone, her long braids hanging half unravelled down her back, Catalina galloped past in the wake of the flying cattle, followed afar off by a panting negro.

Steenie jumped upon a bowlder to look after them. The dishevelled rider soon overtook the herd, and dashing through their midst headed them back. The negro, meantime, had come up and opened a gate, and by dint of dodging and much shouting the cattle were soon all driven into the lane leading to the barn-

yard. Thereupon dismounting and turning her colt in after them, the breathless young hoiden sauntered up towards the house.

Coming unexpectedly upon the junker, who stood waiting at the entrance to the driveway, she cast a swift glance downward at her disordered dress, and courtesying in some confusion stammered, —

“I—I knew not you were here, Mynheer.”

Steenie did not answer; he stood noting in silent amazement the physical development which had taken place in the speaker since their last meeting.

“If you come to wait upon my mother, she is within,” continued Catalina, with a movement of impatience under the scrutiny.

“No — I — yes, I have seen her.”

“So!”

Another minute passed in awkward silence, the visitor still absorbed.

“I bid you good-night, then, Mynheer!” cried the girl, courtesying again, and starting at a round pace for the house.

“Pray you — I — Catalina, will you run away?”

The fugitive halted with evident reluctance.

“I am bidden to eat supper with you.”

“You are welcome,” she said, constraining herself with ill grace to the duties of hospitality.

They turned and walked towards the house, Steenie's eyes still busy, and not without cause. With her tints all heightened and her limbs pliant from her late exercise, the girl's whole person seemed marked by a physical brilliancy not to be overlooked.

“Pray where learned you that trick of riding?” he asked, awaking suddenly to a sense of his responsibility for some part of the conversation.

"That colt is not broken yet; he cannot abide any sort of gear;" she explained briefly.

"Your mother was in terror of the cattle, and ran away."

"Yes, she dreads all beasts with horns."

Steenie hemmed and hawed. For some reason not quite clear, he felt the contagion of his companion's constraint, and strove in vain to lift the conversation from the dead level of formality.

"I have come down for some shooting."

"So?"

"And am visiting at my cousin's."

"Vrouw Wickoff?"

"Yes. I met your mother upon the highway, when she would nothing but that I should stay, despite my sorry plight."

"She could not do less, it seems."

The begum stood on the stoop awaiting them; quite unconsciously she relieved the situation in a moment.

"Catalina, you have given me a great terror; never drive again those mad cattle! Ah!" she cried, with a shudder, "I tremble yet here at my heart to think of it. Mynheer, pardon that I left you. I was beside myself. You would order your dress before eating? There is a servant waiting within to attend you."

But a sudden impulse had seized Catalina. Turning quickly to their guest, she almost took his hand in her eagerness.

"Oh, Mynheer —"

"Pardon!"

"You come lately from New York?"

"Yes," murmured Steenie, somewhat taken aback by this unaccountable change of mood.

"You have seen her, then! Where is she? Is she well? How does she look?"

"She!"

"Catalina! Catalina!" nervously interposed the begum, "Mynheer has to make himself ready for supper, your own dress is to be thought of, the table waits."

The junker made excellent use of the moment's diversion. A dawning look of consternation upon his face was quietly checked, and he answered calmly if a little stiffly, —

"You mean Hester; I hope she is well."

"Hope!"

Catalina's honest stare of amazement was more trying than her question.

"She is not in New York; she is in Albany. I have had no business to take me thither —"

The explanation was interrupted by the begum, who, putting the questioner unceremoniously aside with a profound courtesy to her guest, motioned for him to go.

Deeply grateful at the moment for the interference, it did not occur to the junker until long afterwards that the mother's behavior was somewhat peculiar.

When later they all met in the parlor, the begum explained that her husband was absent from home upon business, and herself led the way to the supper room and did the honors of the table. Meantime she held the conversation strictly within bounds, and prevented any further outburst from her daughter by doing all the talking herself.

Steenie's vacant look showed that he gave but little heed to what she said, and it is doubtful, indeed, if the lady herself could have given a very clear subsequent

account of the drift of her own talk, so differently busied were her thoughts and tongue. Later in the evening, however, she was brought to a sharp recognition of time, place, and circumstance by a chance remark of Catalina's in answer to their guest's parting greeting.

"I know not," he said, "how much longer I may be in Vlacktebos, but I hope at any rate to see you soon again."

"There is good prospect of it, too, for we may go back to New York to live, now that father is made one of Lord Bellomont's councillors."

Lingering upon the stoop after their visitor had gone, Catalina's eye fell by chance upon an unfamiliar object lying near her on the bench. Taking it in her hand, she discovered it to be a powder-horn, heavily mounted in silver and bearing the initials "S. V. C." Starting up, she looked eagerly along the highway with the purpose of recalling the owner, but his tall figure had already disappeared.

"Mother!" she called, turning at the same time to go in.

Receiving no answer, her first impulse evidently gave way to a later. She did not repeat her call, but stood hesitating, one foot upon the threshold, looking at the object in her hand.

Presently a step was heard in the hall. With a quick movement she thrust the horn under her apron, and went in "with an air of nothing."

An hour later, as she sat in the broad window-seat in the seclusion of her own room, she drew forth the bauble and studied the chasing upon the silver bands, holding it the while tenderly in her hand, and polishing it with her handkerchief in a caressing way.

After a little, with apparent forgetfulness she dropped it in her lap, and sat with her head resting on her hand, gazing at the fading tints in the west and the lighting up of the stars, until the tenuous silvery peal of Dominie Varick's far-off church-bell came floating over the meadows, a warning curfew. She arose at the familiar signal, forgetful of the treasure in her lap, which fell thumping to the floor.

With a quick look of remorse as for an injury done to a sentient creature, she sprang to pick it up, wiped it gently, and with a sudden impulse carried it to her lips. Directly she realized what she had done. A hot flush swept over her face, she threw the horn violently to the floor, and darting across the room cast back over her shoulder a startled, guilty look, as if under arraignment before her own accusing conscience.

Next morning, on going downstairs, she sought her mother without delay, and handing over the horn said, gravely, "Here is something Mynheer left behind him."

"'Tis something he needs, too," said the begum, studying it curiously; "he will think it lost; you cannot do better than ride over speedily and take it back to him."

"I will do nothing of the sort!" cried the daughter, in a sudden flutter.

The matron, opening wide her small black eyes, stared after the retreating maiden, and thereupon spent a good half-hour puzzling over this trifling circumstance, as she paced to and fro upon the sanded floor.

Before she could take further action in the matter, however, there came a mounted servant with a message from Vrouw Wickoff, begging the begum and

Catalina to do her the honor of supping with her the following day.

Without consulting her daughter, the begum returned an elaborate message accepting the invitation.

The old negro charged with the duty of repeating this grandiloquence to his mistress looked aghast, but, disdaining to ask either repetition or explanation, hied him home, and recited to Vrouw Wickoff an unintelligible jargon which drew from Steenie a shout of laughter.

The supper-party was a shrewd and characteristic move on the part of cousin Lysbeth. Having heard from her cousin that the Staatses might soon move back again to the city, she straightway bethought her that by one timely and well-directed stone she could bring down a small flock of birds, to wit: redeem her reputation from the taint of unneighborliness by a parting touch of hospitality; do honor to her kinsman's visit; avail herself — no small consideration in the case of so remarkable a personage as the begum — of his services in entertaining; and lastly — whisper it not beyond the pantry wall! — put to good use the uncommon delicacies with which her larder was stored.

When told that she was expected to make one of the supper-party, Catalina for a moment looked panic-stricken and declared she would not go. Waiting for the consternation to pass, her mother asked in the quietest way an artful question.

"Why, then, my daughter, are you in such fear to meet Vrouw Wickoff?"

Catalina was silent; she saw the alternative awaiting her disclaimer. With a burst of resentment at the covert insinuation, she cried indignantly, —

"I care nothing for Vrouw Wickoff! I do not care for anybody. I will go."

"It is well."

Cousin Lysbeth's supper was worthy of her reputation; the napery was of home weaving and bleaching; the ware was brought from Holland by her grandmother; the silver was of honest Dutch handiwork; and as for the fare, each separate viand had been cooked under her own critical eye, from the partridges roasted on a spit before the coals to the delicious izer-cookjes, each branded in the middle with a big "S," her maiden initial, by the baking-iron brought to her husband's house as a part of her dowry.

The begum had honored the occasion with fitting splendor. Not only was her own toilet rich and elaborate, but her interference in Catalina's had invested the uncouth Dutch holiday garb with a touch of Oriental elegance. This, instead of the usual crude colors and violent contrasts, consisted of a dull red camlet petticoat richly wrought with Indian embroidery, relieved by a pale blue jacket of softest cashmere; while, instead of clumsy gold ornaments, the rich tints of her glowing eyes and sunburned cheeks were softened by a double row of gleaming pearls wound closely about the throat.

The anxious mother, thinking perhaps to forestall invidious criticism upon her daughter, whispered Vrouw Wickoff at the first opportunity that Catalina was grown so shy since coming to the country that she had much ado to bring her. To her measureless amazement, however, she presently found herself stultified by the young woman's very unusual behavior. Far from being timid, the latter showed herself auda-

cious. Without waiting to be addressed, she boldly accosted the company, she chattered like a magpie, she interrupted Vrouw Wickoff without compunction, she flatly contradicted her mother, she rallied the astonished junker unmercifully, she paid no heed to anything said to her, and effectually prevented anybody else from talking.

The discomfited mother, affecting not to notice this odd behavior, strove in vain to divert the attention of her hostess. The trouble was, she could not divert her own. With her thoughts wholly fixed upon Catalina, her random words were without coherence. Vrouw Wickoff made no pretence of heeding them.

"What think you, Mynheer?" began Catalina as soon as they had exchanged greetings. "When it was discovered you had left your powder-horn behind, mother would have had me come over straightway to restore it."

"And why did you not?"

"Why did I not? Why did I not?" interposing a little scornful laugh. "Think you I would ride so far upon so slight a matter?"

"'T is no slight matter to make me lose a day's sport."

"So-o!" she exclaimed, with an almost insolent inflection.

"Besides, if you had come, I should have had the pleasure of seeing you."

"I had liefer do something to pleasure myself."

"It should have yielded you some satisfaction to procure me so great a boon."

"'T is a fine speech, that, but why waste so much breath without meaning?"

"I see you would draw me on to an oath to confirm it?"

"Not I, indeed; I would have nothing sworn to but what is worth while."

"By what means am I to convince you?"

"One deed is better than a thousand words," returned the reckless girl, with a toss of the head and a bravado smile.

"So! Then shall I come to wait upon you to-morrow morning."

There was a passing look of consternation, a quick rally, and the forced smile turned to a nervous laugh as she answered, —

"You had best make sure I am to be at home."

The begum, left alone by Vrouw Wickoff's withdrawal to give a supervising touch to the suppertable, listened aghast as the conversational ball was thus tossed back and forth between the young people.

"You may tell me now, then," continued Steenie, with a look of amusement.

"Indeed shall I not!"

"Then must I needs take the risk."

Further talk was prevented by the arrival of Dominie Varick and the announcement of supper.

Next day, Dr. Staats, who had come home on a flying visit, took his wife back to town with him to make some preparations for their forthcoming removal.

Catalina, left alone with the children and servants, wandered about the house in an aimless way, anxiously studying the movement of the shadows on the dial, or from her chamber window scanning at brief intervals the distant highway. She became more and more uneasy as the hours rolled by. At dinner-time she had reached such a state of suspense that she sat pushing about the dishes and drumming on the cloth, unable to swallow a mouthful.

Hardly had she risen from the table, when a man came with a note announcing that Mynheer Van Cortlandt had been called to Breuckelen on some business, which would prevent his coming to pay the promised visit.

An odd mixture of relief and chagrin showed itself in the reader's face as she finished the note. Her suspense, at least, was ended ; she wasted no more time peering from the window, but taking some needle-work, repaired to the orchard, where she disposed herself upon a shaded bench under the apple-trees, her favorite resort on a warm afternoon.

Her little fit of industry soon passed ; her work fell unheeded from her lap, while eyes and thoughts were given up to reading and re-reading the bit of a note which she drew from her pocket.

To one in such oblivion the hours steal by on muffled feet, and so to Catalina the afternoon passed like a dream. The sun was already setting when, upon hearing a faint stir near at hand, she raised her head, and beheld the writer of the note himself standing before her. With a futile effort at concealment, she thrust the crumpled paper in her bosom, rose quickly from her seat, and all her hardihood of yesterday flown, stood dumb and trembling before him.

"I am here at last, you see."

But instead of a welcome, the amazed junker had for his pains only a confused impression of burning blushes, eyes filled with tears, and a vanishing figure.

XXXIII.

A WEEK or more after the supper-party, some social impulse prompted Steenie to send up and invite his old friend Cornelis De Peyster down for a day's shooting.

Cousin Lysbeth was captivated with their visitor. His name was well known and honored in the province. Tales of his family's wealth, moreover, and of the state maintained at the magnificent new mansion in Queen Street had reached the old dame's ears, and not without effect.

But Cornelis needed no such bolstering. Nature, as if to prove that she had not exhausted her resources of wit and comeliness upon his brothers, doled him out a double-handed measure of each at his birth. The hospitable huysvrouw showed that she well knew the meaning of the phrase "hungry as a hunter," by the repast she had ready for the two tired junkers at their home-coming.

Grateful for her bounty, Cornelis crammed the ears of the delighted old woman with alternate compliments and gossip, as they sat at supper. "News, Madam ! the air is filled with it. You know well with what a high hand Bellomont started out ; 't was child's play to the pitch he is now arrived at. He stops at nothing ; he has set the whole town by the ears. He seizes upon ships and cargoes, no matter whose ; charges the highest merchants with piracy ; thrusts Bayard, Minvielle, and others as good out of the council in dis-

grace; and now outdoes everything yet by giving out that he will annul all grants of government lands made in the memory of man. Think of the panic among the owners! Rolling in riches to-day, to-morrow they may be beggars. Another breast of duck, Steenie — enough — enough! I never in my life tasted such cider, Vrouw Wickoff. But as I was saying, his lordship has stirred up a cage of lions, — oh, believe me, he has! Bayard is already flown to England to lay his grievance before the king, the great land-owners are making ready for battle, when just at this moment, alack for his lordship! comes news that the famous Captain Kidd has raised the black flag, turned freebooter on his own account, and is robbing and sinking every vessel that comes in his way. Mark you, 't was Bellomont had him appointed! Not another morsel, good huysvrouw, unless you would have my death at your door!"

So happily absorbed were guest and hostess in their gossip that neither noted Steenie's big eyes and gasp of astonishment.

"See you now how speedily his lordship's curses come home to roost! 'T was well-known this villain was his bosom friend. But the worst remains: you would never believe it in a man of his lordship's birth and breeding; 'tis incredible, I say, yet none the less true that he has gone over, body and soul, to the Leislerians. So! you have heard something of that? Yes, to be sure, Councillor Staats is your neighbor; but has his Excellency's latest freak perchance come to your ears? What think you 'tis? Why, hearing that Parliament has at last taken off the curse of attainer from old Jacob's progeny, his lordship straightway issues an order that their lands and chattels be restored, — *restored*, mind you, after all these years

when they have been bought and sold over and over again. Oh, there never was such a storm since the deluge. Eh, Steenie, what now? Your face is the color of a rag; that last pull through the swamp was too much for you."

But Steenie, without troubling himself to answer this friendly inquiry, arose and stalked out of the room.

Cousin Lysbeth was greatly interested in the discovery that Steenie's cynical mood, his queer talk, and strange laugh, entirely disappeared after his friend's visit. She was not surprised to see him instead rather pensive and preoccupied. What more natural? He missed that gay, high-hearted junker's companionship; she missed it herself; it had acted upon her like a current of electricity, quickening her circulation and exciting her sensory ganglia. She accordingly sympathized with her cousin, and sang, with proper reserves, the praises of their departed guest.

Steenie listened to all this in silence. One might have thought, indeed, he had heard never a word of cousin Lysbeth's kindly solace. One might have thought, moreover, that all the birds had flown the land, so empty was the hunter's pouch, these days, when he slipped it from his stalwart shoulders, on getting home.

At last one morning there arrived a letter from his mother with the news that things were fast getting in trim for his mission to Holland, and that the time of his going had been already fixed.

It proved to be stirring news. He acted like a man just awakened from sleep, and possessed with a feverish desire to make up for long inaction. He seemed hardly able to endure the petty obstacles to his set-

ting forth out of hand. Upon any available wings he would have flown as the bee flies, and left his belongings out of account. But even the best-regulated household is at the mercy of events. The horse he usually rode was lame, another had gone on an errand to Nieuw Utrecht, the rest were at work in the fields. Cousin Lysbeth, with ready sympathy, went forth herself after one of the field-horses. The junker knew too well the deliberate pace of the good huysvrouw; he knew the difficulties of the way, including a hill and a marsh; he knew the slow plodding gait of the heavy cart-horse; knew that it must be baited and reharnessed before starting; and dwelling upon all these points with a too active fancy, he hastily threw his things into a pack, slung it across his shoulder, and without awaiting his kinswoman's return started forth on foot.

Making his way through the thick woods surrounding Vlacktebos, over the hills beyond, and down through the straggling village of Breuckelen, with its one poor little church planted conspicuously in the middle of the highway, he came at last to the ferry, at the close of day, and was put over in the lumbering little ketch to the other shore.

Here was to be seen no sign of the broil and turmoil Cornelis had told of. The harbor lay shining and waveless as glass, reflecting the gorgeous pageant of sunset, and showing the town with its score of steeples, towers, and wind-mills turned topsy-turvy in its placid water. Within as without reigned the same unbroken peace. It was the supper-hour, Nature's breathing-time, when the buzzing, fretful human swarm had gone to hive, and the streets were deserted save for a few sober, belated people hurrying

to their homes. Lights gleamed from the houses as the junker passed along, and in the gathering gloom the bits of gardens looked cool and dim and shadowy, while odorous shrubs, wafting a neglected fragrance on the air, sealed the spell of perfect peace and repose.

The morrow was Lord's Day. Like all the world, Steenie went to church. Cornelis's report was verified. In their old pew sat the Leislars, a reunited family. The junker felt a deep stir within him, a heart-queasiness which was neither pleasure nor pain, but upheaval. The church, the congregation, the measured tones of the preacher, the swashing of the waves upon the neighboring rocks, the distant carol of the song-birds borne in through the open windows, all seemed whelmed and merged in a background, vague, shifting, neutral, on which was projected in magic relief that well-known form, which he studied now as if for the first time, and with an intensity of interest never felt before. A form well-known yet new, a face familiar yet not the same. Was the change wholly in the face, or somewhat in him? Perhaps this thought added to his bewilderment. Had the ripening years wrought in him a clairvoyant vision, revealing what lay hidden to the purblind gaze of youth and passion? Whatever the change in him or her, the same charm still hung about that serene forehead, those steady, clear-gazing eyes; it was with the lower face the ruthless remodeller had been busy, there where the same serenity strove in vain to veil the traces of the relentless strigil.

At the breaking up of the congregation many old friends gathered about the widow and her children with hand-shakings and congratulations. It is no-

body's business to insinuate that these worthy folks were not sincere, or that the recent good-fortune of the family had anything to do with the matter, notwithstanding the ironic turn to Cobus's lip.

Steenie waited his turn. The crowd opened, and Hester stood before him. The tranquil smile died away on her lips, perhaps on account of the suddenness of the meeting, and a fleeting little look of trouble passed over her face.

It was the wake of a volition. It was as though she had foreseen and prepared herself for this emergency. Her manner was as nearly like the old, free, familiar manner as a conscious imitation can be like reality. The junker himself was constrained. As growth is the distinctive function of all life, it was inevitable that the two should have warped away from their old perfect adjustment. It was like every coming together of friends long separated, each striving to take up and go on with the severed relations, and each groping blindly back from different standpoints for the lost thread.

As they came out upon the greensward before the fort, Steenie unconsciously turned towards the Copake Rocks, their favorite stroll in the old days. Hester hesitated. He looked at her anxiously, as if attaching some peculiar significance to her decision. It was promptly made, and in his favor. They walked along the beaten path by the shore, they clambered over the rocks; visiting all the old nooks and haunts, talking of the recent happy turn of fortune in her family, — of their prospects and plans, of Cobus's long struggle in England, of their own life in Albany, of the energetic advocacy of their cause by his Excellency, and like topics. At last all this came to an end, like the

running down of a clock. Then fell a silence. Each had dreaded it, fought against it, put it off by make-shifts, all the time conscious that it must come. Awkward, painful, terrible, as it became in its indefinite duration, it was the first honest intercourse of the day, — for intercourse it was, as real as any tongue-told commerce of their thoughts.

If, as they sat thus in dumb suspense waiting for the swift spirit to move, all their past had unfolded itself before them like a panorama, which of the two, in the long and varied history, would have found the seed of a single remorse? Which would have acknowledged in the whole record a deed or thought unfaithful to that spring-time betrothal of so long ago?

The junker knew that it was for him to speak, and he did speak. As he cleared his throat a shallop turned the point from the East River, and slowly floated past them just outside the breakers. It had the effect of an intrusion. He waited for it to pass; then, without turning his head or lifting his eyes from the crisp blue waves dancing before him, he said suddenly, —

“So our long waiting is at an end. I thought never to have seen the day.”

Receiving no answer, he presently went on : —

“I thought you cruel, — I will be frank with you, — I had many bitter thoughts of you. It seemed you held me of mean account. It is easier now for me to see that you had some cause for your course. It was perhaps a pride I should have revered.”

“Do not call it pride,” she answered, scarcely audible for huskiness. “Call it rather duty.”

“Whatever it be called, it is satisfied; it need no

longer be considered. All you waited for is happily accomplished, and the ordeal is ended."

"I know not if it be."

"What mean you?"

"'Tis feared by some among our friends here that his Excellency's order will not be obeyed, but will be resisted in the courts."

"That touches only the gear," broke in the junker, impatiently. "What has that to do with the matter? Your father's memory is vindicated, your name is cleared of taint; 'tis that you were concerned about."

A slight flush kindled in Hester's cheeks at this rebuke, and she looked humiliated.

"I was thinking of my mother," she murmured apologetically.

"'Tis time to be thinking of ourselves, if indeed I am any longer worth thinking of in your estimation."

"I am sorry to have grieved you; it was innocently spoken."

He choked down his bitterness at this meek reply. "I have forgotten how to make plans," he went on, more gently, "for happiness, at any rate. Thus far in life all the schemes held dear have come to naught. I believe no longer in any good-fortune. I cannot shake off the dread that it is a dream from which I shall soon awake, to find life colder and drearier than ever."

"We have had small cause for joy these late years," she said, vaguely.

"Nor ever will until you cast off the fetters you have so long worn."

"Fetters?"

"Of superstition."

She flushed, but refrained from speaking.

"Of mistaken zeal, of devotion to the dead, which has led you into neglect and injustice to the living."

She sat for a space without remark, as if weighing his words and making allowance for his mood. "How will it help us now to talk upon that?"

"By way of warning," he returned quickly.

"I thank my heavenly Father no such call is like to come to me again in this life. If there should —"

He turned, and waited intently for the conclusion of the sentence.

"— I trust and pray to him I may have strength to do my duty as it is made clear to me," she concluded, firmly.

He rose to his feet, with an angry look, and walked a few steps apart, as if to prevent the answer which rose to his lips.

The brief space for reflection was evidently improved by each.

"Hester," he said, coming back to his seat presently, in a calmer mood, "this is not the way for us to talk. I am at fault. Let us have done with reproaches; they cannot bring us together; they cannot help to bring back those old days, those old dreams, all that sweet companionship, of a time so long ago it seems a part of some former life."

"I meant not to offend you," she murmured, touched by his words and tone.

"Let it pass. I was childish. I am not offended. I ought not to be offended by anything you can say, so long — so long as you love me?"

He finished the sentence with an inflection so emphatically interrogative that involuntarily she put out her hand towards him, as if for a reassuring caress.

He seized it eagerly. His face lighted up with a

look long strange to it. He drew a deep breath. His tongue was loosed. His pulses beat time again to the measure of hope. With one strenuous effort, he rose forth from the atmosphere of benumbing apathy which had overhung and hemmed them in since leaving the church door.

"Think you they will ever come again, those times, Hester? Are we not grown too old, and wise, and sad? We were silly then, two happy fools. I wonder often, now-a-days, if one needs not be a fool to be so happy?"

A pleased look stole over her face. Regarding him shyly, with an evident reawakening of her old admiration, she listened to his enthusiasm and yielded to his impetuosity. This change of mood was not lost to his watchful eye, and it acted upon him like sunlight on a flower.

"But why cannot we grow silly again, sweetheart? I feel within me the makings of a rare fool."

She laughed outright at this conceit, — an answer which, more than a hundred words, availed to rend the filmy web of constraint years of estrangement had woven between them. He seized her other hand, he folded her in his arms. They awoke, as it seemed, from a long sleep, and looked back upon their trouble as upon a nightmare.

Approaching sounds were heard; their privacy was presently intruded upon by a group of idle boys coming to sit upon the rocks. It was more than an interruption; it was a shock. It resulted in dashing the cup from lips thirsting for a long-expected draught. It was one of the finite nothings that have infinite effects.

They rose and sauntered up Broadway.

In the street, a short distance before them, stood a little group of three well-known persons, who seemed in the act of separating. Abram Gouveneur and Mary Milborne walked northward towards the Landpoort, while Cobus, turning away from them with a loud laugh and a parting gibe, strode southward towards the fort.

His face was still beaming with the afterglow of laughter, when by chance he raised his eyes and beheld, just beside him, his other sister and her swain. His face changed in a trice. The smile gave way to a scowl, and without a word or look of greeting he passed them by.

Having long since adjusted his relations with Jacob Leisler junior, Steenie made a stout effort to ignore the matter, and went on talking with studied indifference. As well might he have hoped to ignore an iceberg; turning one's back and vaunting the sunshine unhappily does not stay the lowering temperature.

Hester made no pretence of indifference, nor effort to hide her dismay. From her silence, indeed, it is much to be feared she lent but half an ear to Steenie's talk. But the junker, it should be said, made sorry work of talking. He had been cruelly winged, and no longer able to soar, he lamely fluttered along the ground. Arrived at the graveyard gate, why did not some instinct warn him to drop the matter for a time, or adjourn it until he could lay an offering on the altar of the fickle goddess of moods? Because youth would forever be overcoming the giant Circumstance with a pebble, and learns nothing from the bones of former victims; because, perhaps, a subtler instinct whispered him to go on.

He did go on, and Hester blindly followed. They walked up and down among the grass-grown mounds in the little burying-ground, he manfully wrestling with the situation. Growing weary of fighting in the dark, an impulse presently seized him to recognize what he had been so laboriously trying to put out of sight, drag it forth like a skeleton from the closet, and make an end of it in fair daylight.

"Hester," he cried, suddenly, "you have always shown yourself a girl with a mind of her own. Do you suffer yourself now to be ruled by yonder —" he checked himself — "by them who have no rights in the matter?"

"Poor Cobus!" she answered, deprecatingly; "he cannot forget the past, he cannot understand how things have changed in his absence. He comes back thinking to find everything as it was. He has waited so long, he has borne such trial and humiliation, he should be forgiven."

"I forgive him. I forget him. I think nothing of him. I only claim *you* shall give no heed to his glowerings."

"I must needs consider him, he has toiled so hard in my behalf. He has lifted us from the dust. He has redeemed from reproach our martyred father's name."

"That can he never do. Take no such comfort to your heart!" he burst forth, as if irritated beyond endurance by this unexpected sounding of the old string of discord.

"What say you?"

"The memory of that man's tyranny and persecution," he went on, with blind infatuation, "will never be forgotten nor forgiven. 'Tis burnt in upon

men's hearts; 't is interwoven in the annals of the province."

"You — *you* say this!"

"The king may make what decrees he will, and forbid that a spade shall be called a spade, but neither king nor Parliament can wash out guilt."

"Guilt!" repeated Hester, in a tone whose breathless amazement aroused him too late to a sense of what he was saying. "Think you, then, my father was guilty?"

Looking down into her whitening face and glowing eyes, he took alarm, and hesitated.

"The truth, — the truth, if you be a man!" she demanded, imperiously.

"I do!" he answered, with the look of one driven to the wall.

"Then, as God my heavenly Father helps me, I will never have more to do with you!"

"Hester!"

"Never! — *never*! — NEVER!"

The solemnity, touched with horror, of her look and manner shocked the repentant junker. Bewildered by the suddenness of it all, he stared stupidly at the face before him, — stared until, with returning consciousness, he saw there signs, well-known to him, of a resolution fixed as fate. He did not speak, but drawing a long breath, as of one after suspended animation, he turned away, and walked out of the graveyard.

XXXIV.

HAVING caught a fleeting glimpse of Steenie at church, Cornelis De Peyster came, a few days afterward, to welcome him back to town. Doubtless it was due to the host's own mood that the visitor seemed a thought more gay and rattling than usual.

"Steen, trust me, bouwerie life is a bad thing for you. You grow to look like Van Twiller's owl; 'tis truth, I swear! You've heard the news about old Bellomont? 'Tis well he cannot hear me; there's not such another tyrant betwixt this and the Grand Mogul. This latest freak is worthy of him. What think you? 'Tis nothing more nor less than to dig up the bones of yonder gallow-birds."

Disgusted by the apathy on his listener's face, the speaker shook him by the shoulder.

"Hear you that, man? Leisler and his henchmen are to be dug up, I say. A store of powder is to be burned over them, bells are to be rung, and such noisy honor done. 'Tis the newest London method to wash out guilt, you may be sure. By and by when this precious carrion is purged of sin and duly sanctified, 'tis then to be buried in the church, 'neath the very sanctuary roof, mind you; and there is a monstrous stir about it among the deacons and elders. Ei? So you can open your eyes at last!"

The apathetic host indeed showed a languid interest.

"But that is nothing to the pother raised in town. The memory of that old bully is so green, and the dread of him so little abated, that many are quaking in their shoes lest, brought back to the light of day, his ghost should usurp its ancient place, and sweep the land with fire and sword. But I see you care nothing for all this. Your eyes are strained across the sea. Come, then, tell us about this Holland voyage. When do you set sail?"

"To-morrow — next day — I know nothing about it; at any hour the ship is loaded."

"So! You are on tenterhooks, then. Egad, if I were but in your shoes! You might do worse, too, than take me in your train. My word for it, I'd not dishonor you. But I know not, after all, that I want to go. Here are stirring times coming I would not miss. The old Mogul yonder cannot hold this course long; there are ugly squalls ahead. He upsets everything; heaps honors on the Leislerians; declares war to the knife against all the world beside. Oh-h-h, there is promise of rare sport hereabouts before you get back! But what time is set for your stay?"

"None; 't is not fixed; it may be forever."

"Poh! poh! Never tell me you are downhearted over going! Ei? I swear you are! What, wear a face like that over such a lucky chance! There's not a junker in the province but would jump at it."

"They are welcome." ~

"Well, well! was ever heard? But 't is the way; luck comes to them that prize it not. Pearls cast before — Pardon! Oh, but this is a passing megrim, a grumbling-fit the sea-air will blow away."

"I make no complaint."

"Truly, and do you not? Complaint! I hope not,

indeed! Complaint at having a chance to see the world, to travel, to get out of this little hive and spread your wings!"

"And what is the good of all that?"

"Good!—but I'll not waste time talking to a madman. Steen, your spleen is upset. Go take a posset and get on your nightcap. One might think," rising to go, with a loud, rallying laugh, "I swear he might, that you were leaving a sweetheart behind."

"I'm leaving all behind. There's none cares whether I go or stay. I care not myself. What matters it? If the rest of the world prove no better than this corner of it —"

"Ay, but it will, — it will!"

"So let it, then. Good-by. 'T was good of you to come. You were ever friendly. I shall think of you often among yonder strangers."

The visit, perhaps by bringing about the formulation of certain undefined thoughts, resulted in filling Steenie with uneasiness and an impatience to be gone. Every day he wandered down to the dock, and restlessly hung about to watch the stanch bark "Angel Gabriel" loading for the voyage.

Getting weary, one morning, noting the slow process, he sauntered across town and out through the Landpoort to the open country.

Passing Van Dorn's bouwerie, some impulse prompted him to stop. The door was opened by Ripse, now grown to a chubby, staring boy in breeches. Walking in without a bidding, the junker found Tryntje bending over Rip senior, who lay stretched on a bed in the corner. The look which lighted up the little huysvrouw's face at sight of him was the best welcome he could have had.

"What is here?"

"'T is Rip; he thinks himself in a poor way."

"What ails him?"

"The rheumatics 't is."

"Ay, Mynheer," interposed the invālid himself, with the open-hearted manner which had been an appreciable charm even in his worst estate, "rheumatics — ugh-h! — caught lying out all night in a ditch, coming home from Annetje Litschoe's. She always said, my — ugh-h! — my vrouw here, I should come to that, and so you see I have — ugh-h! And what does she? She takes me home and cares for me, instead of driving me off like a drunken dog!"

"Ye'd best not be a fool now, if ye can help it!" broke in sharply the little vrouw, who was rubbing the patient with some home-made liniment.

"She did, Mynheer, — she did, I say, and waits and tends on me night and day since — ugh-h! —"

"Well, then, will ye stop?"

"— as I had been good and faithful to her."

"Go on, do, and bring back the fever with your talk!"

"There's not such an — oh, moord! — another huysvrouw in the land — ugh-h!"

"He is growing a baby, Mynheer; give him no heed," muttered the nurse aside to Steenie, as she finished her task and turned away from the bed.

"I believe you, Rip," said the visitor heartily, in answer to the patient. "Take you good care, then, my man, that you give her no needless trouble henceforth. But I am sorry to find you in such a case, with the winter at hand. How goes all else with you, vrouw?"

"All well, best thanks, Mynheer."

"Never trust her, — never trust her, Mynheer," put in the sick man again between his twinges.

"Would ye bring back the fever, I say?" asked Tryntje, interrupting her patient, with a vain attempt to check the coming confidence.

"Things are at the worst, Mynheer, — at the very worst. We are to be turned out of this, — turned out on the highway like dogs, and me, — ugh-h! — as you see, in this state. Out of our own home, bought by yonder one. Oh, my treasure, this kills me!"

"Ye will be talking!"

"By my vrouw yonder, I say, with her own gear."

"How is this?"

"'T was the old commander's, as ye know, this bouwerie. We bought it — 't was for anybody to buy — at the sale, and now comes his Excellency and — ugh-h! — and bids us be packing. They would take it from her, — all she has in the world, and never a stuyver of the cost paid back."

"They 'll never do it."

"We are warned, I say."

"But Vrouw Leisler, — she knows you, she will do something."

"No, no, that will she not, Mynheer, nor raise a hand. She hates the sight of us since we bought the land."

"But his Excellency?"

"Speak not of him. My Tryntje went to him yonder at the fort, and showed him — ugh-h! — the truth. He turned her a deaf ear, and when she would argue upon it, as she has a way at times, and spoke her mind to his face, he had her thrust forth the council chamber. Now tell me — tell me — ugh-h! — if things are at the best."

Lending a divided attention to the sick man, and following the movements of the silent vrouw busied with her household tasks, Steenie sat musing upon what he had heard, when he was aroused by the rattle of the latch. Seated in the corner, at the foot of the bed, the door opened back upon him, and the new-comer did not at once see him.

"My treasure!" It was an ecstatic cry from the vrouw as she embraced her visitor.

"So, Tryntje! You are glad, then?"

"Never till now! And so tall, — a woman grown. Where is my little dear? She is lost, she is gone."

"No, she is not gone, but come, — just come back to you, silly old goose to cry! Come, now, dry your eyes! I have heard of your sick man from my father, — we came back but yesterday. I have brought him some medicine, and there are things for yourself," setting down a basket upon the floor. "Sh-h! sh-h! Will you stop, I say? Go empty your basket, that I may have it for another time! Along with you! I will not be soaked in tears, — 't is a pretty welcome indeed after all this time. So, Rip, I am sorry to see you down, man. You must — er — pardon — I — I saw not —"

"Catalina!"

"Mynheer!"

"So 't is you who are playing the doctor?"

"Yes — no — I knew not the need of one till to-day. My father told me — 'twas he sent the medicine — since he became councillor he has little time for healing the sick."

While delivering this spasmodic answer, the speaker, all the dash of her entrance spent, edged nervously towards the door.

"But you are never leaving your patient so soon?"

"'Tis my vrouw, Mynheer," put in Rip, "'t is ever my vrouw she wants. Tryntje nursed her when a baby. 'Tis my vrouw she comes to see; she cares not a seawant's shell for me, as why should she?"

"I leave the patient to you, Mynheer. I go to help Tryntje with the basket."

"'Tis a firm friend of the vrouw, that," said Rip, looking after her as she disappeared from the room. "Her worshipful mother, the doctor's great lady yonder, sends us a store of things and many fair speeches, but she cares not enough to come."

In this wise the sick man maundered on, Steenie nodding mechanical assent. It was fully quarter of an hour before the two came back with the empty basket. The visitor was tying the strings of her hood, preparing to go.

"Good-day to you, Rip," she said, pausing at the bedside. "I hope the next time to see you better."

Turning then with a constrained air to Steenie, she dropped him a formal courtesy, and, murmuring something inaudible, walked to the outer door, followed by Tryntje.

"Away so soon?"

"I must needs go — I — my mother charged me not to loiter."

"By your leave, then, since you have no other company, I will walk back with you."

The junker looked puzzled at the evident embarrassment which his suggestion caused.

"Many thanks — but — I — you are most kind, Mynheer. I would else, but my horse is at the door."

"What matter?" persisted the officious escort. "I

will walk at *yður* side, then, since you will not walk at mine."

Interpreting after his own fashion the two or three disjointed words which he heard of the muttered answer, the junker bustled after them and seated the visitor in her saddle. Turning then, he took leave of Tryntje.

"I am sorry to leave you in this trouble, *vrouw*."

"'T is nothing."

"I will not forget, be sure, if I see a way to help you."

"You were ever good, *Mynheer*."

"He will be well soon, the goodman yonder, never fear."

Nodding respectfully in recognition of the attempt at encouragement, but plainly without sharing the hope expressed, the *vrouw* courtesied repeatedly as her guests walked slowly away, the tall junker at the horse's bridle, and Catalina fidgeting vaguely with the saddle.

Directly they were upon the highway the rider began to talk garrulously, showing an odd agitation at the least pause in the conversation. Her companion was naturally puzzled at the apparent want of purpose with which she persistently kept to one subject.

"'T is well to try to raise her hopes, *Mynheer*, — 'tis good of you. She is much downcast, howsoever she holds up her head; she never complains, she would not to me. It was nothing but 'All is at the best, — all at the best,' but I saw her wipe the tears, on the sly. And father says, — he went to them yonder a week ago, — he says there is fear of *Rip*; if the cramp once lays hold upon the heart, there is an

end of him. She knows it, too, — she has puzzled it out ; but she will not say so, she will never open her lips to complain."

"Poor vrouw! 't is a hard case. She is a brave little body, and I would I might do something for her. So you have come back to town to live?"

"Yes, yes, we are but just come, — yesterday. What a great pity 't is for them to lose the bouwerie!"

"So 'tis, yes, a pity indeed. You must find the town much changed."

"Oh, another place ; it seems no more like home — I would go back — their own, too, hers alone if right were right, and all they have ; what will they do?"

"Be sure some way will be found, — something can be done to hinder it ; 't will never be suffered, such a wrong. Aha, see ! there is a place unchanged for you, — Smiet's Vly yonder ; not a leaf nor a bush is turned. 'T is the spot we first met, you and I. You remember the bull, and the children running away, and the mad prank I played you?"

"I — I was very young ; 'tis long ago now," was the evasive answer.

"What ! have you forgot how I teased you, and the rage you were in, and how you scolded me?"

The junker laughed outright at the picture he had conjured up, and in his enthusiasm in recalling its details failed to note his listener's distressed look at the reminiscence.

"Yes, yes, your face was blazing red, your eyes shooting fire. You stripped my handkerchief from your arm and stamped it underfoot, and declared eternal war against me. Surely you must remember something of that?"

"I — I was a peevish child."

"That you were; you held to your threat, too. 'T was a long time till —"

"But if, touching this matter, his Excellency has declared against it, what can be done, Mynheer?"

"Ei?"

"Can it be taken to the king?"

"This business of Tryntje's? Humph — haw — I much doubt — I will think upon it. Oh, but 't was a droll time we had that day. See you there the very spot! Here stood Corny De Peyster calling me, the bull down yonder in the Vly, big Claes running with the axe, you farther on by the Waterpoort stamping your bit of a foot and tragically casting me off forever, while up the Magde Paetje there was — ahem — er — I —"

The speaker stopped short in his floundering, and made no attempt to finish his sentence. He walked on for several minutes without speaking. Catalina, at once puzzled and relieved, stole a curious look askance at her glum escort as he strode along, but made no attempt to break the silence. Presently recollecting himself, by a resolute effort he shook off the impression which weighed upon him. With a sweeping glance townward, as if in search of a suggestion, he forced himself to speak.

"Yes, the good old times are gone; one knows not what new things are in store for us here. Nothing stays a minute as it was; the town and townsfolk will be changed past knowing against my coming home."

"You are going away?" asked the listener, quickly.

"Yes."

"To — to — a long journey?"

"To Holland."



"'T is doubtful if I ever come back."

"That need not take so long ; one may be back again in a few months."

"'T is doubtful if ever I come back."

"So !"

A note of consternation in the tone drew the junker's attention to an odd change in the speaker's looks. The glowing color suddenly faded from her cheeks, her eyes slowly closed, she clutched blindly at the saddle-bow and swayed in her seat. None too soon came her escort's supporting grasp. Upholding the limp figure with one hand, he turned the horse's head towards the Magde Paetje in quest of water.

As if surmising his purpose, the rider opened her eyes, straightened herself in the saddle, and, as it seemed, by an effort of pure will resumed self-control.

"Mynheer — pardon," gathering up her reins. "Do not think me unmannerly. You will not mind that I leave you. I must needs get home."

"But — but 't is better that I be with you — 't is not safe ; you may be taken again — Catalina — I beg you — "

Giving the whip to her horse, however, the wilful girl galloped off in a cloud of dust, only drawing rein to the slow pace required by law as she passed through the city gate, and disappeared from sight.

Reaching home, Steenie was met on the threshold by his mother, with the news that the "Angel Gabriel" was to sail the following day. This announcement for a time put every other thought out of his head. Despite his previous apathy, now that the moment of departure had come it stirred him into a healthful excitement. The rest of the day was filled with the bustle of final preparation. Although busied with his own concerns, he did not forget his promise

to Tryntje, and commended her case to his mother's care. Madam Van Cortlandt, who had heard of the Van Dorns only as old retainers of Leisler, was conservative in her promises.

"So? Humph! I will see. But now, my son, I must leave you to do what more there is by yourself. Your father seems not well of late, and needs my attention."

The evening was only half-spent. Left to himself, the junker brooded a long time over the fire. Then, yielding to a restlessness which forbade the thought of sleep, he threw on his hat and cloak, and wandered out into the town.

Without thought as to his course, he visited many of his old haunts, bringing up at last in the dock, where he sat down upon the weather-stained cross-beam of the old ducking-stool, and gazed off upon the water, as if longing for the moment of his setting forth.

The night was stormy; the clouds hung low over the little town, shutting out the world beyond. Through the thick drapery of fog, the feeble lights of the sparse shipping looked like the dull fiery eyes of some malign disembodied intelligence keeping guard over the unconscious watcher.

Sitting thus absorbed, he presently became aware of some unusual stir in the town. There was the tread of many feet, the suppressed murmur of voices, while from time to time dark figures, singly and in groups, could be seen hurrying in the direction of the fort.

Brought back from his reverie to real life by this strange occurrence, and moved still by an unconscious interest, the interest of habit, in what belonged to the old life and old world from which he had already in

intent severed himself, he refrained from following the crowd, but climbed with listless steps to his favorite outlook on the Verlettenberg.

Here, though nothing could be seen for the darkness, the wind brought to his ears faint sounds of martial music from the direction of the Landpoort. The sounds gradually came nearer. Heard more distinctly, the music resolved itself into the rhythm of a solemn march. A long row of flaming torches was seen moving down Broadway. He remembered Cornelis De Peyster's words, and knew what it all meant.

With the languid interest of one foreign to place and occasion, he left his post and repaired to the fort. He arrived in time to see a memorable procession. Behind a strong detachment of troops, marching with draped flags and arms reversed, came a funeral car, decked with mourning emblems, and followed by a long line of attendant citizens carrying torches, which flared and sputtered in the driving rain.

Massed about the entrance to the fort was a dense multitude, silent and waiting. Steenie made one of them. As the gates opened and the funeral car rolled in, the bell in the old church-tower struck the hour of midnight. The junker shuddered. Certain old impressions came swarming back upon him with intolerable vividness.

The commander was, then, at last justified. The ignominy of the scaffold and the darkness of the grave had been followed by this resurrection to the honor of the world and due sacramental rites.

Next morning, as he sailed out of the harbor under a brilliant sun, this midnight pageant seemed to Steenie as something he had dreamed.

XXXV.

THE clouds which had so long shadowed the lives and fortunes of the commander's family at last showed signs of breaking. Like nature's clearings the change came gradually. A dim white disk of promise, glimmering at first vaguely through the vapor, brightened presently into a noontide blaze of fulfilment.

If, as has been argued, there is needed a sombre background of trial to bring out in their true values the common blessings of peace of mind and daily bread, Vrouw Leisler and her little flock by this time should have been brought to a due appreciation of these unprized gifts of Providence.

The atonement, so long in coming, seemed now as complete as it lay in the power of man to make. The taint had been taken from their blood; their dead had been reinterred with Christian burial and public honor; the order had gone forth for the restoration of their estates; nay, even his Excellency, in the late election, had found their name one still potent enough to conjure with.

Furthermore, to signalize this heyday of returning prosperity and happiness, Mary announced that she had consented to become the wife of Abram Gouverneur. The young widow, in the full bloom of health and ripened beauty, had, this time of her own free will, yielded her hand to the importunity of the keen-eyed young Huguenot, who was as unlike in character as he was in person to her former spouse.

As if to emphasize in every way the contrast to her earlier nuptials, the sun rose cloudless on her wedding-day, the glory of June shone in garden and orchard, friends gathered from far and near about the now prosperous family, and even their beloved old dominie came tottering in on the arm of Cobus to perform the marriage service.

Although still hale, time and suffering had left their script on good Dame Leisler's face and sapped the vigor of her frame. She stood resignedly aside, and left the brunt of the preparation to Hester, who, with her grave air of responsibility, might have been taken for the bride's elder sister. Mary, indeed, was almost foolish in her gayety, as long-frozen sources of sentiment, thawed by this new-found joy, bubbled up in her heart and flooded to her lips and eyes for expression.

When the feast was over and the guests were gone, the whole family escorted the bride to her new home, a cosey little house which the energetic groom had fitted to receive her.

It was on the way back that, with the natural rebound of feelings long overstrained in one direction, Vrouw Leisler gave vent to certain characteristic reflections.

"Oh, if Jacob—if your father could but have been here to-day to see how we lift up our heads, — to see Mary, too! She was ever his favorite. What need for wonder at it! She was an obedient child. She did ever what she was bid. See ye now the fruit of that! See, Hester, how she is rewarded! If he could but see her! But ei! ei! he cares nothing for all that now. He wears a crown of glory in paradise if ever yet a mortal did! Ay, he is looking down on

us, — I cannot believe but he is. He knows all has been done. Think of that, now! I pray he may forgive us all we do amiss. If he but knew how we have striven day and night to carry out his will! But we are not as he was. He should think of that. His sight was made clear, he went not astray, he knew the right and what was best for us. I pray we may guide ourselves to please him. It must meet his liking, this, one would think. Abram has been from a child under his eye, like a son, as it might be, since the day when he himself befriended the mother — ye were too young, Hester, to remember the gibberish she spoke — in her sorrow and trouble so long ago.”

The good Vrouw's maundering came to a natural end; they had reached home. With one accord all stopped at the foot of the steps, realizing perhaps for the first time that, despite its attendant smiles and congratulations, despite the songs of poets and the jests of all mankind, a wedding is as truly the first act of a tragedy as a funeral is the latest. The ring, the veil, the bridal wreath, have filled the opening epithalamium with sounding rhymes; let it fitly end with figures of a vacant chair, a vanished form, a silenced voice, the listening for a step that comes no more, of a familiar service rendered not again.

In the momentary silence, as Vrouw Leisler paused with her foot upon the bottom step, it might be to make the foregoing reflection, it might be to take breath, a tall figure rose from the bench on the stoop above and greeted them. It was Barent Rhynders awaiting their return. His appearance following so closely upon certain words just spoken by her mother may have seemed significant to Hester. Although her voice was wanting in the chorus of cordial greetings

with which the visitor was welcomed, he must have gathered from her look that his presence was a pleasure and a relief; else surely would he not have stayed on until one by one the tired family withdrew and left them alone.

They sat on the porch in the soft summer air and watched the moon rise over Remsen's Hoodgts, while the discordant clamor of the day died away to a drowsy murmur, as the bustling little town slowly settled itself to repose.

At last Barent rose to go. He had already stayed beyond his hour, and it was late, according to the simple notions of the time. Directly Hester, who had been sitting all the evening in silence, began to bristle with things to say. Unconsciously she followed the lingering visitor down the steps and called him back for a forgotten word. Without plan or suggestion they presently found themselves sauntering up and down the deserted street. Despite Hester's protest, Barent must needs go back to the stoop for her cloak. Thereupon they wandered on to the dock.

Here they paused to look off upon the water, to taste the cool breeze blowing up through the Hoofden, and note the moon's white track upon the river just where it turns with broad sweep to join its sister flood.

As they stood thus it chanced that the ferryman came rowing slowly up to the landing from his last passage to Breuckelen.

"What say you?" whispered Barent. "Shall we take a turn upon the water? Here is Jan would catch at a chance guilder, and the river is smooth as a goose-pond."

Hester looked wistfully at the water, hesitated a

moment, then followed her companion down to the landing.

As they stepped into the clumsy little craft the night-watch came stalking to the spot to demand their errand, but upon the representation of the ferryman winked at the irregularity and forebore to interfere.

With long, steady stroke the skilful Jan propelled them out into the noble river, not, as now, a turbid sewer hemmed in by masses of brick and mortar, noisy with screaming whistles, gay with flaring lights, crowded with a forest of foreign masts, but broad and peaceful and undefiled, inclosed by wooded banks abounding in mysterious shadows, where nothing broke the solemn hush save the rippling of the water on the rocky shore, the far-off chorus of the tree-toads, or the plaintive persistence of the whip-poor-will, — sounds which seemed born of the night to accentuate the silence.

"'Tis wondrous beautiful!" said the junker in a half-whisper, as if afraid to break the spell by a discordant note.

"Yes," was the murmured answer.

"Mary has had a rare day."

"Ye-es," as before.

"'Tis a comfort to think of her coming to such happiness after all her pain."

"'Tis no more than her desert."

"Nor so much; there's nothing good enough for Mary, when it comes to that. Yet there's not a finer junker in the province than Abram."

"'Tis an old matter between them."

"So?"

"They had a thought of each other when children."

"In Milborne's time?"

"Yes, and long before, when Abram spoke in his outlandish French chatter we could never understand."

"And she broke off with him to take Milborne?"

"'T was a sore trial to her, but — 't was at *his* bidding."

"Your father?"

"Yes. 'T was not with a man's light he walked; he had surer guidance. 'T is now made clear how all he did and said was for the right. Well for Mary that she heeded him!"

Barent, perhaps conscientiously refraining from assent until he had arrived at conviction, perhaps with reservations which it would have been hard to define, made no answer. To Hester, luckily, his speech or silence upon the matter appeared to make no difference. She had merely paused for breath.

"I was ever rebellious and stubborn, and heeded not in my pride his blessed words. I was hardened in disobedience, and more times than one sorely angered him."

"Think no more on it! You cannot mend what is past. You must be excused, not knowing you were wrong."

"That did I; I was wilful in my wrong-doing, and now henceforth must I abide the consequence."

"Take cheer! 'T is Mary's turn to-day; to-morrow 't will be yours!"

"Mine has passed and gone; 't will come not again."

"You are downcast now over Mary's leave-taking, — that is all. Next week 't will look another way."

"It cannot; there is no chance of it."

"In a few months Mynheer will be coming back from Holland."

"If it be Mynheer Van Cortlandt you have in mind, 't is all one to me whether he comes or stays."

Staggered by this unexpected speech, the junker made no answer. He was not of the nimble wits who can cover their dismay by tossing in a conversational stop-gap.

As before, his companion seemed unconscious of his silence and of the fact that he was staring at her with might and main.

"I was accursed," she went on, bitterly, "to hold converse with a man who told me to my face that awful murder might be justified. 'T is right I should suffer for my sin," she continued, with added vehemence. "I shudder to think he was of the party that did it, their kith and kin. I feel that I have clasped the hand of a murderer. 'T is the penalty I must pay for my wrong-doing; 't is the yoke I must bear, and a grievous, heavy yoke it is! Forgive me that I cry out under it! I am not yet grown callous to the smart."

Again Barent was mute. He may well have been dumfounded at the revelation he had heard. A silence fell between them; it was prolonged till clearly neither cared to break it. As if relieved by her outburst of feeling, Hester yielded to the soothing influences of time and place, and found a needed solace in the brooding quiet.

Thus they glided on. Far out of sight of the town or of any sign of man's presence, they were alone in the wilderness. Worn out by the fatigue and excitement of the day, lulled by the rhythm of the dipping oars, Hester's head began to droop.

The vigilant junker arranged a roll of sailcloth for a pillow ; then covering her from the dew with the warm cloak, he sat at hand as they fared homeward, guarding the unconscious sleeper with watch-dog fidelity.

Not until they rounded up to the dock did she open her eyes. Then staggering to her feet, she looked about in bewilderment. Barent spoke a reassuring word.

"'T is the dock, Hester, — see ! Let me go first ! — now give me your hand. Have a care where you step ! So, here we are again !"

"Yes, come ; 't is time we were going. Hark ! What o'clock is that ? It must be very late. Ugh-h ! how cold it grows ! Let us make haste !"

Barent strode in silence by her side as she hurried along the winding Strand. Upon the stoop he faced about to take leave.

"You would leave me, then ?" she cried, in a dismayed tone.

"That will I not, now or ever, if you but bid me stay," he said, stoutly.

"I bid you neither stay nor go," she answered, wearily. "I bid you do what you will."

She stood with her face in shadow, leaning against the doorpost, while he pondered for a whole minute what she had said.

"I am a fool at guessing folks' meaning. I made a blunder once ; I would not do the same again. You know my mind, Hester ; 't is the same now it was then. If you would take back what you said yonder, let me know it in one plain word !"

She made a movement to speak, but the words died on her lips.

"If you say not *no*, I shall think you mean *yes*."

He waited a minute in trembling suspense lest she might speak.

"Hester — Hester!" he cried at last, in a voice deeply moved; "I am a happy man."

At the end of his transport she released herself from his embrace with a sigh.

XXXVI.

ONE theme held sway over Steenie's thoughts all the voyage long, nothing happening in the weary round of ship-life to break its hold upon him. Perforce he must sit and think, and think, and think. All nature, too, seemed in his confidence; the waves breaking upon the vessel's prow to his enkindled fancy sang of the selfsame subject, the winds whispered of it, the stars winked knowingly down that they were in the secret. An end, or a welcome interruption, came to all this when the "Angel Gabriel" cast anchor in the Zuyder Zee, and the junker found himself in the home of his ancestors. Before he well realized the fact, however, or had breathing-time to look about upon the odd sights and varied forms of life in this new-old world, there came a letter telling of his father's death and calling upon him to go home.

He received the news with calmness, perhaps because mere words, blown thousands of miles across the sea, lose something of their dramatic force, perhaps because he was getting shock-proof. Neither, as it proved, did the interruption of his travels cause him any great regret; for, setting sail on his return voyage without loss of time, he saw the land recede with a look of pure indifference.

On the long homeward way he had ample time to reflect upon the new responsibilities awaiting him. For the first time he became sensible that his mother's more pronounced character had blinded him to his

father's unusual qualities, and that the family, one and all, had been unconsciously guided by the rare sagacity and great worldly experience of his dead parent.

This subject, having been ripely considered, gave way, like a variation in music, to the original theme. Again the scene in the graveyard arose before his cooled and sobered fancy. Like tormenting insects, certain questions with regard to it, questions necessarily unanswerable, kept buzzing in his ears: Had the change been in him or in Hester? If she had ever really loved him, could she have cast him off thus? Could he help his opinions? Ought she to expect all the world to share her delusion that her father was a saint and a martyr, or accept as sane the judgment of her morbid conscience that filial duty should overshadow every other, and that her old righteous revolt against her father's tyranny had become through mere lapse of time a heinous crime?

But a profounder riddle than any of these was his own changed attitude with regard to the matter, was the growing remoteness of his own point of view, was the lack of any poignant regret as to its outcome. Had this change in himself come about gradually? Had it been of volcanic action? In either case, what had caused it? He was bewildered to find himself unable to decide.

Tiring of these puzzles, others awaited him; the sea-life showed itself prolific of them. Unbidden, there uprose before him the scene of his last meeting with Catalina, her strange behavior and unaccountable swoon. Thereupon, as he hung musing for hours over the taffrail, came remembrances of other times when she had been odd and baffling, and he recalled

with a passing smile his old delight in her irascibility. Thus idly reminiscent he made a discovery. For the first time, in his self-absorption, it occurred to him that a change had taken place in the little maid's demeanor, — the old attitude of bristling hostility was gone!

Directly this puzzle outvied all others in interest. Catalina's conduct under this narrowed scrutiny began to assume new lights and significances. At last, with the suddenness of an electric flash it all stood before him in perfect consistency.

He jumped up and paced the deck; it seemed a very narrow and cramped little deck now, when he longed for a boundless course over which he could stretch his long legs with some chance of relieving the white heat of heart and brain during those first few hours after his discovery.

Whereupon he began to turn his eyes towards the western horizon with growing suspense, to question the captain and sailors about their progress and the probabilities of arrival, all his patient apathy gone.

At the end of a dreary gray day the long-expected cry was heard, "Land ho!" The next morning the ship entered the harbor. Greeting an outward-bound vessel just issuing from the Hoofden, they were met with the news that a fast had just been proclaimed in town on account of the death of Lord Bellomont.

This startling report speedily brought the dreamer back to real life, to thoughts of the cause of his homecoming and of the afflicted family he was so soon to meet. Moreover these two deaths presaged, as he well knew, momentous changes in private and public, and so invested his return with a sense of strangeness and upheaval.

Notwithstanding the familiar look of everything as he sailed up the harbor, years seemed to have elapsed since he went away. His voyage already began to serve as a dividing-point in his life, and all that lay beyond it belonged to a past even now of shadowy remoteness. The same sense of strangeness pursued him on land. Making his way along the well-known streets, he stared about with the dazed look of a stranger, — so suddenly had everything grown shabby, dwarfed, or disappointing.

Reaching home, he was greeted by the announcement that the family had removed to their summer estate upon the Hudson. This news, coming as a culmination to the train of thoughts described, filled him with a sense of loneliness and desolation. He longed for a welcoming face or voice. In this mood he hurried around to the Staatses'.

A slave at work in the garden saw him at the door plying the knocker, and came hurrying to say that the begum and the children had gone to the farm at Nieuw Utrecht, leaving only a couple of servants behind to care for the doctor, who was kept in town by business.

Among the political disturbances which followed upon the death of Lord Bellomont, and filled with stormful echoes the brief administration of Lieutenant-Governor Nanfan, two only came home to the returned traveller with immediate interest, — the trial and conviction of Colonel Bayard on the charge of high treason, and the persecution of his mother by Nanfan's officious auditing committee because of her refusal to give up the papers of her dead husband. Madam, it should be said, was as calmly defiant of their threats

as she had been of Leisler's in the time of the revolution, and, as it turned out, with the like victorious result.

What with these political distractions and the imperative demands of important private duties in connection with his father's estate, Steenie had small leisure for ocean dreams. Though overlaid in his mind, however, it speedily appeared how little they were forgotten.

In his frequent comings and goings between the town and the new manor-house upon the river, he had thought many times of the Van Dorns as he passed the well-known *bouwerie*; but the urgency of present business had always prevented his stopping, until one morning, surprised by the littered stoop and general air of desolation, he rode up to the door and found the cottage empty. Conscience-stricken at his neglect, he at once set about a search, and soon succeeded in finding the family temporarily lodged with one of the neighbors.

Although plainly astonished to see him so soon returned from his voyage, Tryntje greeted the junker with her usual air of grave respect.

"How goes it with you, *vrouw*?"

"All at the best, thank ye much, *Mynheer*!"

"And Rip, — he has still the rheumatics?"

"'Tis no great matter."

"You have then left the *bouwerie*?"

"*Mm-m*," answered the little woman, dryly affirmative.

"So!" exclaimed Steenie, with instant apprehension, "they took it from you?"

"I came not out of it upon a wink," was the answer, pronounced with a certain grim significance.

"But they gave you its worth?"

"I see it not yet what they give."

"So! humph — umph! Say a good word for me to Rip. I will see you soon again."

Tryntje courtesied, and gazed after the galloping horseman with a look of much perplexity.

Steenie's non-committal air at parting covered, as it proved, a serious intent. Before a week went by, he came with the offer of a small *bouwerie* belonging to his father's estate.

Certainly his statement was explicit enough, but Tryntje stupidly stared at him as if she had not heard. He repeated his words.

"'T is for me — this?"

"Yes; the cottage is small, but so is the rent, and you may get help to till the land."

Turning away her head and looking fixedly in the other direction, Tryntje made one or two attempts to speak, but beyond a choking sound nothing was audible.

Steenie suddenly discovered that he was parching for a glass of buttermilk. It was a happy thought; the little *vrouw* darted away to get the draught, and came back in a measure composed and coherent.

Needless to say, the timely offer was accepted. Rip's few belongings were soon removed, with the help of the neighbors, and at the end of a week the family were fairly installed in their new cottage, not very far removed from the old, on the Sapokanican road.

Here, calling upon them not long afterwards to see if they were comfortably settled, Steenie found his new tenant loquacious in explaining the superior convenience of her new quarters; the tulip-bed was

larger and better placed for the sun than the old; the brook, being running water, was better for the geese than their former muddy pond; and the bees were disposed in a more sheltered nook.

"You find everything, then, to your mind?" asked the pleased landlord.

"Beyond all I ever knew, Mynheer."

"You are in need of nothing?"

"Nothing, Mynheer, best thanks."

"You have wherewithal to buy food for the young ones till the crops ripen?"

"Never fear, Mynheer!"

Turning to go, Steenie was almost overturned by a slave who came riding up, carrying a large hamper before him on the saddle.

"'T is like her!" exclaimed Tryntje, receiving the hamper.

"Who is that?"

"Catalina!"

"She has been here?" with sudden eagerness.

"Ei, not this age; she bides yonder on the island."

"In Nieuw Utrecht?"

"Mm-m; but lets never a week go by that she sends me not something like this ye see."

"So!" muttered Steenie, in whom the incident seemed to have awakened a new train of thought.

"But 'tis not my old Catalina, that was here and away over the fields, and filled the house with song!"

"No?"

"Not she; her face is as long as the dominie's, with no cause one can see, and never a smile for her best friend, they say."

"In Nieuw Utrecht? Humph. Good-day to you,

vrouw. I must not stay longer lest I be late getting home. Let me know if anything goes amiss."

After his professed eagerness to get home, Tryntje naturally wondered to see her landlord, instead of continuing his homeward way, turn about and ride smartly back towards the town.

Tryntje's astonishment, however, was as nothing to that of cousin Lysbeth, on seeing her kinsman come galloping up to her door that same evening, as she sat after supper upon the stoop.

The visitor was not the less welcome for being unexpected; and having feasted him with cold meats from the pantry, the dame drew up her chair, in keen anticipation of a quiet gossip, as he settled himself with his pipe upon the stoop.

Family news, an account of his recent voyage, the state of the province, these topics of their desultory talk, although of absorbing interest to cousin Lysbeth, availed not to keep Steenie from dropping shamelessly to sleep in the midst of her eager comments and questions. Realizing then the cruelty of prolonging the interview, she straightway packed her drowsy cousin off to bed.

Having early business in the fields, the bustling huysvrouw was up and gone, next morning, long before her lazy kinsman came sauntering down to his breakfast.

Once up, however, his indolence gave place to a restless activity. He did small justice to the dainty breakfast set forth for him, but dispatching the meal quite unconscious of its excellence, called for his horse and rode briskly away.

At a turn in the road, he came by chance upon the begum riding in her palanquin. With practised skill,

the lady blinked out of sight her look of surprised recognition, and greeted him with matter-of-course cordiality.

"'Tis long since we saw you, Mynheer."

"I have been out of the province, and am but just come back," he explained, returning the speaker's salute.

"Yes — pardon — it needs not to explain — you have my deep sympathy — pardon again — you visit here *Vrouw Wickoff*?"

"For the moment."

"I hope for the honor of seeing you."

"I was — er — am now on the point —" The junker paused, with a look of embarrassment. "You are most kind."

"I go to-day up to town; my husband sends word a box is come from India. With good fortune I am home again to-night, and if you find yourself here to-morrow —"

"I thank you much."

Thereupon with renewed compliments the lady went on her way to Breuckelen ferry, while Steenie took a speedier advantage of her invitation than she had dreamed of.

The servant, having bestowed him in the parlor, went in search of Catalina. Sunk in a luxurious Indian chair in the darkened room, the eyes of the waiting visitor idly followed the wake of an intruding beam of light out through the open hall door to an alluring little perspective of green fields and waving tree-tops. During the long absence of the servant his thoughts, flocking along the lighted way into the outer air, visited in swift succession divers scenes rendered memorable to him in the neighborhood.

Roused from his revery by the sound of approaching voices, he was presently aware of figures upon the stoop darkening his field of vision. Checking an impulse to rise and go forward, he consciously listened. A younger sister was urging upon Catalina some project to which she was disinclined.

"You have no excuse; you must go. All the junkers in Seawanacky, they say, will be there; and as for Vlacktebos and Nieuw Utrecht, there'll not be a soul left at home. You should have heard the talk at church last Lord's Day. The Lefferts, Van de Bildts, Remsens, Martenses, Van Voorhuys, Cortel-yous, Couwenhoovens, Lotts, Stryckers, and Hegemans will all be there."

"So?"

"There'll be every sport ever was heard of, 't is said,—reels, hipseysaw, shuffle-shuffle, cards, ninepins, plucking the goose, balls, and I know not what."

"You may go and bring me back a history of it all."

"Not I. You shall see it for yourself."

"I care not to go."

"And why, tell me?"

"I care not for it."

"'T was only last year you could not get enough of it. Poh! You must go, I say."

"Have done! I will not!"

"Suit yourself, then. I think too much of my breath to waste any more of it upon one so stubborn. But yonder is Johanna waiting for me to go gather cresses. Good-by. You'll be sorry when 't is too late."

A deep sigh from the solitary figure upon the stoop presently aroused Steenie to a realizing sense of the fact that he had been playing the eavesdropper. Ris-

ing quickly, he walked to the outer door, but was stayed upon the threshold by the unexpected dismay his sudden appearance produced.

Clutching with convulsive grasp the bench upon which she sat, Catalina rose slowly and stared at him without speaking. Her look and attitude were so expressive of a deep inward shock that the junker himself was at a loss what to say.

"I have affrighted you. Had you not heard of my return?"

Catalina shook her head.

"'Tis some weeks now — when my father — surely you heard of our great loss?"

She muttered an assent under her breath.

"My mother sent for me. I had scarcely landed. I have been much pressed since getting back. There have been troublous times yonder in town. My mother has been plagued by these busybodies. And Bayard, — you have heard how they try to hunt him to death?"

With resumed self-control Catalina sat quietly down upon the bench, and motioned him to a seat.

He remained standing, as if with some passing scruple about accepting the invitation.

"Tryntje — the Van Dorns — I stopped yesterday to see them in their new home."

The listener's face kindled with a faint interest.

"Whiles we talked came a messenger loaded with your bounty —"

The listener suddenly found her tongue.

"And Rip, — he is not worse for the moving?"

"None at all, as it seems. We had talk of you, the little vrouw and I. You should hear her upon that theme."

"You are come here to — to visit Vrouw Wickoff?"

"No."

"So?"

The little monosyllable quivered upon her lip, and came fluttering forth with scarce breath enough to make known its birth.

"No, Catalina, I am come to see *you*," he said, bluntly, sitting down as he spoke on the bench beside her, and looking close into her face with anxious eyes.

She made a vague movement as if to escape, but it was evident the effort was beyond her powers. She seemed well-nigh transfigured by an access of emotion; her eyes were filled with changing lights, her limbs were rigid, her organs of speech were paralyzed.

"And why should I not?" He paused as if for some sign of assent. "Are we not old friends?"

Still there was no answer; only in the startled eyes gleamed the same impotent purpose of flight.

"On the ship coming home I thought over my whole life as never before. I weighed my friends according to their worth. I examined well my heart as to which of them I prized and which I yearned to come back to."

She put out her hand with a gesture of protest.

"'T was then my eyes were opened. Then I saw my fatal mistake. Oh, Catalina, there came before me something, as it might be the finger of God, pointing to the precious flower blooming these many years in my pathway, which yet I had never reached to gather. From that moment all has been clear as the light; from that moment I have thought day and night of you, — of you, Catalina, as the one most dear to me in life."

"Stop!" she cried, a note of terror quivering in her breathless voice.

"All these years, I say, this spark has been smouldering in my heart, and I going blindfold on with no sense of it. I thought of your old childish spite as still living. I thought of it as a thing not to be shaken off, until, in the midst of the ocean yonder, something whispered me one day it was gone." He paused in vain for an assuring look. "Tell me, Catalina, is it so?"

He took her hand, but almost started at its icy touch.

"Speak, pray you, Catalina! Is it cured, that old spite? Pity my blindness that I did not know my own heart! 'Twas duty blinded me, — duty, do you see? I thought myself bound by those old childish bonds. Catalina, do you hear me?" Stooping lower, he whispered tenderly in her ear, "Speak, little one. I am come hither to-day to tell you this, — to tell you that all my hope of happiness is now in you. Catalina, my treasure, I love you with all my heart!"

Receiving no word or look of answer, he bent down and kissed the cold little hand, when, as if awakened to life by an electric touch, she sprang quivering to her feet.

"You — you dare!"

He gazed at her in amazement.

"Nev-never speak to me again!"

"What! 't is not dead, then, — not dead yet! Heed it not, Catalina! Catalina, dearest, put it away from you! Mark me, 't is child's play; let it not follow us and blight us forever! We are man and woman now. 'T is a man's love I offer you."

"Go away — go — go!"

"Listen. I was a fool to speak thus without warning. You shall have time to think. I will wait till you know your mind."

"No — no !" she protested, violently. "I know it now — I know it well !"

"What then —"

"Go — go — go — go !"

"You do not love me ?"

Stepping swiftly forward, she caught the doorpost and steadied her swaying figure upon the threshold. There was a pause. It seemed a whole minute passed. Then constraining herself by a measureless effort, she answered, in a tone firm, unhesitating, almost defiant,—

"No !"

XXXVII.

SPEED being an impossible factor in the begum's travelling, on account of her peculiar means of conveyance, the journey to New York and back in one day proved necessarily a tedious undertaking. Indeed, it was not until long after supper that she arrived home with her hamper of Indian goods.

Having been met and noisily welcomed by the younger children, and hearing from a trusted servant that all had gone well in her absence, she took no further thought of household matters, but gave herself up heart and soul to the delightful task of unpacking the rare fabrics and curious ornaments she had brought. Thus engrossed, it was not until she came upon something especially intended for Catalina that she noticed her absence. With the thought of giving her a pleasant surprise, she went directly to her daughter's chamber, where she found the recluse curled up in the window-seat.

"Alone!" cried the mother, going gayly forward, holding the candle in one hand and waving the flashing bauble in the other.

With her face turned towards the darkened window, the daughter seemed not to hear.

"Why are you in the dark?" asked the begum, with a growing presentiment.

Still there was no answer.

"Catalina, you are in pain?"

"No."

The hollow dreariness of tone startled the anxious mother. Quickly putting down the things in her hands, she flung herself on her knees by the window and clasped the speaker in her arms.

"My daughter, what is it?"

"Nothing!"

"Catalina!"

"Oh, do not speak to me! Go — go, and leave me alone!"

She sprang to her feet, and almost shook herself free from her mother's embrace.

Shocked by the despairing cry, the begum rose, and stood gazing at her daughter in bewilderment. Making no further offer of sympathy, however, after a moment's thought she slowly withdrew, and, going downstairs, walked up and down for an hour or two among the unheeded stuffs and trinkets. Later in the night she stole with cat-like tread to Catalina's door and listened. Hearing within a soft footstep coming and going in an aimless, wearying march, she crouched upon the floor, and waited in suspense until with the breaking of day it ceased.

As soon as the household was astir the cautious mother, questioning the servants, learned of the visit received in her absence. Involuntarily she heaved a sigh of relief. A part, at least, of the mystery was solved; but directly, as if realizing that what remained had become more impenetrable than ever, she yielded to her former agitation. Instinctively she resorted to her embroidery frame, and after a long time spent there in taking false stitches, snarling her silks, and tossing about her head-gear, she suddenly arose with a look of resolution, ordered her palanquin, and

betook herself to Vlacktebos to wait upon Vrouw Wickoff.

Cousin Lysbeth, summoned from cabbage-planting in a neighboring field, clumsily dissembled her annoyance at the visit, as she wiped her perspiring face on the under side of her apron, and passed an investigating hand over her cap and kerchief.

"'T is a day without a fault," began the visitor in an indefinite manner, as she settled herself in a proffered seat; "it has no cruel wind to spoil the good sunshine; it brings back thoughts of my own country. You care not much to go about, Vrouw Wickoff; you love better, I think, to hug the chimney-nook."

"The chimney-nook gets little of my hugging," answered the dame dryly, mindful, perhaps, of her sweating forehead.

"Pardon!" Recalling herself from a moment's preoccupation, the visitor recognized her mistake. "Your affairs—I thought not of them—take you out. Yes, such a repute for thrift is not gained sitting in idleness."

Vrouw Wickoff received the tardy tribute with an embarrassed little cough.

"Work," continued the begum, in a strain that had no obvious pertinence to anything suggested by the visit, "is called a blessing; the worker forgets—how great a thing is it to forget!—and is happy. Work brings too the deep sleep that shuts us up every night in a tomb and brings us forth every morning, like the resurrection the dominie tells of."

"So!" murmured the puzzled huysvrouw, vainly trying to find some profitable application of this platitude to her neglected cabbages.

"It helps to pass away the dull hours," went on the

begum, too intent upon her own purpose to heed her hostess's perplexity; "you forget the solitude, and you are not sad."

"Work is a good thing enough," said the dame, sinking back in her chair with a timely sigh of fatigue, "so there be not too much of it."

"But when 'tis over, and the night comes, and there's nobody to fill the chair yonder, then think you not of your children, your kinsfolk, and wish for some of them here?"

"I remember that I am an old woman, and count not upon their coming," said Vrouw Wickoff, sturdily, but not without a touch of bitterness.

"There is one — your cousin, the junker that comes so often to visit you — seems not to mind you are not young."

"Who is that?"

"Mynheer Van Cortlandt."

"He is like the rest," answered the dame, sceptically; "he comes to suit himself, with little thought of me."

"He has, then, something this way that draws him from the town?"

"Who knows? A junker must be doing something. 'Tis to get a drink of my buttermilk or a day with the birds."

"I met him by chance yesterday on the highway, but he had not his gun."

"Then I know not his errand, — some folly, no doubt, to waste his money on a dog or a colt. I concern myself not with his doings."

"So!" The visitor studied the speaker with a searching glance strikingly at variance with her indifferent tone. "I am glad at least you have him with you."

"That have I not; he is but a bird on the wing, — here to-day and away to-morrow."

"He is gone?"

"Long ago."

"He comes soon again?"

"Not he; 'tis a doubt if I see him before the wild geese fly."

"That is many months."

"These are troublous times yonder in their bickering little town."

"'Tis why he has grown so grave, perhaps."

"He is like me; he has much to do of late," said the dame, with a significance not to be mistaken.

"Pardon! I keep you from work." The begum instantly rose.

"You make a short stay," faltered her neighbor, in a feeble protest.

"I must needs go," subjecting her hostess's face to a final scrutiny. "'T will be a good year, they say, for the crops."

"That's as it turns out," commented Vrouw Wickoff, with professional reserve. "You will be going, then?"

"Yes, they look for me yonder; 'tis nearly noon. I hope soon for the honor of a visit from you."

With a profound salaam the visitor was gone, leaving the dame as bewildered as upon her former visit.

Returning home, the begum found Catalina upon the stoop in a state of unaccountable excitement. With the detective sensitiveness of a barometer, the mother knew directly that something had happened in her absence. Abstaining, however, from question or comment, she watched her daughter's every movement with anxious interest. The repression of yesterday had given place to a feverish thirst for action.

"You are come? Where have you been? I have wanted you! I have searched for you everywhere!"

"I am here," said the mother, reassuringly.

"'Tis well you are come, else I had gone without you."

"Gone!"

"Yes; I would go to town."

"So! and why so far?"

"Because — because — oh, I cannot tell why, but I must go, — I needs *must* go!" she concluded, with growing imperativeness, as if to forestall objection.

"You shall go, my daughter," was the calm reply.

"Dear mother!"

Surprised, as it seemed, by this prompt acquiescence, the petitioner clasped her indulgent parent in a fervent embrace.

"But when, — when? How long must we wait?"

"Not long."

"But how long?"

"We will go to-morrow."

"Father, — what will he say?"

"I will send him word to-day."

"I may go, then, and make ready my things?"

"Yes."

In her precipitation the overjoyed girl let fall upon the floor, as she hurried away, a folded paper. Immediately her watchful mother picked it up, and read without scruple the following letter from Hester: —

DEAREST CATALINA, — Here is grate news for you. I had thought of late to have ended my life a spinster but Providence has ordayned it otherwise. How I wish for you here that I might tell you face to face I am to be married! Scarcely can I yet credit it myself so strangely

it sounds in my ears. Barent it would seem has never given me up in his hart sence years ago in my blindnes I cast him off, — see what it is to have forbearance. He was my blissid father's own choyce as you well know, thanks be to my Heavenly Lord and Master who has cured my wicked pryde and opened my eyes to his trew merrit. Now at last I see my duty and find my best content in doing it.

As you have been ever my faithful frend I hope to have your prayers and good wishes in this grate change.

Your obed't and loving ser't,

HESTER LEISLER.

Although it does not appear that the begum had any well-defined theory as to her daughter's purpose, it may be taken as in a measure significant of her expected stay in town that she set forth next morning with only a few changes of clothes and her inseparable Indian servant for escort. There were, to be sure, the bearers of the palanquin, and the two slaves left to attend the doctor's wants in town, to eke out the household.

As they approached the shore in the rolling and tossing old ferry-boat, Catalina grew more and more agitated. She longed yet dreaded to arrive. Her excitement indeed reached such a painful pitch that when at last they stepped ashore in the dock she clutched her mother's arm and dragged her at a breathless pace by the nearest way home, darting anxious, furtive looks down every intersecting street.

Doubtless Dr. Staats had long ago given up as futile all attempts to fathom his wife's motives. If on this occasion he felt any surprise upon seeing her reappear with Catalina, he gave no sign of it. By thus neglecting to concern himself with the lesser politics of the

household, the good doctor gained much valuable time for the larger pursuits which held him tied to the town while his family were in the country.

Arrived at her journey's end, Catalina's mood suddenly changed. Her look of eager hope gave place to one of blank helplessness, which in turn yielded to an expression, harrowing to her anxious mother, of dumb, weary, hopeless waiting.

The begum made bad work of her embroidery in those days; she snarled and knotted, and cut and ravelled, without advancing an inch on her design.

At last, one morning, having found Catalina in her room pacing back and forth from window to window, while her untasted breakfast grew cold on the table, and noting with alarm a distinct shrinkage of the rounded oval of her face and a growing hollowness about the eyes, the excited mother, coming back to her embroidery, threw down the frame with a violent gesture, and then and there took the case into her own hands.

Having inquired of her husband with particularity the way to the Van Cortlandt manor, she dressed herself with unusual splendor, and attended by the largest escort the household afforded, set forth upon an errand the nature of which she chose not to divulge.

Midway upon the road the lady's attention was drawn by a distant sound. Looking up, she saw approaching an imposing equipage enveloped in a cloud of dust. As it came nearer she recognized the Van Cortlandt coach, drawn by four horses and escorted by outriders in mourning, the whole making a prodigious show and bustle as it rolled heavily along.

Ordering her bearers to climb a bank upon one side of the road, the begum made way for the ponderous

vehicle to pass. Supported on sumptuous cushions, her dress glittering with jewels, the silk curtains of the palanquin draped effectively about her, she formed a striking picture on the lonely highway.

As the coach drew near, Madam Gertryd, accompanied by the widowed Lady Bellomont, was seen sitting within. To the profound and ingratiating obeisance of the begum the owner of the carriage returned a freezing nod, as she rolled slowly past. The dark cheeks of the Indian flushed at the studied discourtesy. She sat speechless with indignation, looking after the retreating carriage. After some minutes' reflection, however, her face slowly cleared. The reason of the affront was plain. Dr. Staats had been one of the obnoxious auditing committee which had called the haughty Dutch matron to account, and pursued her with threats and legal process. The remembrance of this fact, if it did not induce her wholly to forgive the offender, plainly appeased in large measure the begum's anger. Quietly giving the order to her servants, she turned about and followed back towards town in the wake of the lumbering chariot.

Traversing thus leisurely her homeward way, busied with the new turn given to her thoughts by the late incident, she came upon a small cottage by the roadside, from the door of which, as she passed, a familiar figure came forth and proceeded slowly down the garden path.

Calling upon her bearers to halt, the begum alighted and hastened after the little huysvrouw, who, unconscious of being observed, continued her way to the bottom of the garden, where, pausing before a row of beehives set against the wall, she threw her apron over her head with a loud wail.

Suspecting her purpose, the visitor stopped, with a look of deep concern, and listened.

After a little the vrouw uncovered her head, and knocking upon the hives one after another, cried in a voice choked with grief, —

“Sh! sh! my bees! He is gone at last! Have done with your buzzing! He is dead, I say! Never opens he his eyes again! Never comes he to ye again! My Rip — he is dead — dead — dead!”

Familiar with this old custom, and shocked by the intelligence she had heard, the begum softly retreated, and stood by the stoop waiting for the mourner to return. Soon, however, unable to refrain from offering her sympathy, she approached again, saying, —

“Tryntje, my good Tryntje, I hear you. My heart is sad for you. Weep! weep! 't will ease the load. But bethink you, too, 'tis best for him; 'tis over at last, all his trouble; he sleeps, he is at rest, he has no more pangs!”

But, as if deaf to her words and unconscious of her presence, the little vrouw went on from hive to hive with her despairing lament.

“Zoo! He's gone — gone! Ye'll see him no more with his pipe on the stoop yonder! Never! He is dead, I say! Hush, little fools! Would ye break his sleep? Go sing round his grave when I have it planted with turf, and bid flowers grow there, and fetch me honey thence! Will ye have done, noisy rogues, and let me think? Dead — dead! I'll not believe it! 'T was but this morning he opened his eyes and spoke to me!”

“Tryntje!” called the begum.

“Look ye, go not away from me, too, my bees, as my Rip is gone!”

"Tryntje, I say, remember your children! Remember they were Rip's children, too!"

"See ye not I am alone, pretty bees? See ye not Rip is gone — gone — gone not to come again? Look then ye leave me not, too!"

"Tryntje, vrouw, hear but a word. You are not alone. You have friends. I will send them that will help you. Catalina will come. We will not forget you. Take comfort, I say."

Finding her attempts at sympathy unheeded, the begum at last reluctantly withdrew. Arriving home, she did not forget her promise, but directly dispatched to the afflicted woman a store of necessaries, with a servant to help her prepare for the coming funeral.

Contrary to all her hopes and expectations, however, Catalina made no offer to go, nor took, as it seemed, more than a passing interest in the matter. Vainly the begum, in her dramatic manner, recounted every detail of her visit to the *bouwerie*; the listener only wearily interjected an occasional "So!" or "Poor Tryntje!" at pauses in the narrative, and directly the story was over thought no more about it.

Meantime there came about a long-expected crisis in public affairs, which threw the whole province into a ferment of excitement. The timely arrival of Lord Cornbury, the new governor, changed in a moment the whole course of public policy. The Leislerians were thrust out of power, and, so far as possible, amends made for their mischievous and unlicensed doings. In the long list of these recited, it is only pertinent here to note that Colonel Bayard was saved from the scaffold, and that a stop was put to the persecution of Madam Van Cortlandt.

These acts of justice were consistently followed by the dismissal of Dr. Staats and his coadjutors from the council. Thus, it will be seen, the begum had divers grounds for personal concern in the crisis. So absorbing, indeed, was her interest in these public issues at the moment that she left Catalina to dream away the hours among the Copake rocks, and quite forgot the existence of the afflicted Tryntje.

Thus a fortnight slipped away, when, one day, as she was setting forth upon some errand, in her palanquin, a funeral bell began to toll from the church-tower in the fort. The doleful sound reminded her of Tryntje, and directly, with a touch of remorse for her long neglect, she gave orders to be taken to the *bouwerie*.

She found the bereaved widow upon the stoop, in warm discussion with a man whom, upon nearer approach, she recognized as the town sexton. Tryntje was criticising, with looks of indignation and dismay, a paper which he seemed to be reading.

Thus engrossed, she failed to notice the presence of her old mistress, who stood patiently awaiting the result of the discussion.

"'Tis a true and honest account, and the money due, every stuyver of it," said the sexton, as if in reply to a protest.

"Huh!" was the scornful rejoinder.

"Hark ye! I will read it again."

"Oft reading makes it none the better."

"Three dry boards for the coffin, seven guilders ten stuyvers."

"Three!—*three* boards! Heard ever any one before of so much timber to one coffin?"

"Think of the size of him. He was a big man."

"Mm-m! the very size of an angel," assented the mollified vrouw, with a sudden choking, "that he was; there's none like him left."

"Three quarters of a pound of nails, one guilder ten stuyvers," pursued the sexton.

"Where went all the nails? Nigh upon a whole pound of nails to one coffin! 'Tis past belief!"

"Making coffin, four and twenty guilders. Cartage, ten stuyvers."

"'Tis robbery!"

"A half-vat and an anker of good beer, twenty-seven guilders," pursued the imperturbable sexton.

"There was never the half of it drunk in the house!"

"One gallon of brande-wyn, thirty-two guilders."

"Lieve hemel!" shrieked the little vrouw. "Where went it, then? It came not here."

"They drank it in his honor. 'T was what he liked best, mark ye."

"That did he,—that did he; nothing so much. Oh, Rip, if ye could but come back, man, ye'd hear no more hard words about the brande-wyn!"

"Six gallons madeira for the women, eighty-four guilders."

"Zoo! zoo! They were thirsty that day!"

"'T was for grief, mind ye; nothing so much dries the throat."

"'T is true."

"And they mourn not every day one so close to the liking of all."

"Zoo! One and all!" with a fresh outburst of tears. "Who could help but to love him?"

"Sugar and spice, five guilders. One hundred and fifty sugar cakes, fifteen guilders. Tobacco and pipes,

four guilders and ten stuyvers. Digging grave, thirty guilders," continued the sexton in some precipitation, taking advantage of the listener's emotion to hurry over several objectionable items.

"Om God's wil!" burst forth the little dame, wrathfully, the tears still shining in her eyes. "Thirty guilders, — thirty, say ye, for one grave?"

"Remember his size, will ye?"

"'T is out of all reason!"

"He looked down upon the most of men."

"Mm-m! that did he; 't is true."

"Would ye have him stinted for room in his last bed?"

"No — no — no-o-o!" sobbed the widow.

"Or put in bent or twisted?" continued the crafty sexton.

"Ye know I would not."

"Inviting to the funeral, twelve guilders. Marritje Lieverse, for assistance, six guilders. The whole, two hundred and forty-nine guilders. A true account, and small as can be made," concluded the sexton, thinking to finish under cover of the vrouw's sobs.

But the keen ears were on the alert.

"Two hundred, say ye, — two hundred and more? 'T is beyond all sense and reason! Two hundred and fifty guilders! I have not the half of it in the world! Not the half of it, I say, with the clothes on my back! Two hundred, ye say, and forty-nine guilders for burying one poor Christian?"

"And a modest sum, too," protested the sexton, stoutly.

"God forgive the poor for being born, then, and spare us, good Lord, from death! We cannot afford to die."

"I'll make the payment suit your convenience; vrouw."

"That will ye or get nothing! Two hundred and forty-nine guilders! I saw not so much money since buying the bouwerie yonder they have cheated me out of!"

"I'll be easy with ye, I say. Give me what ye have in hand."

"T is not much."

"T is a beginning, and I'll not let ye forget the rest."

"That will ye not. Go along with ye, and come back to-morrow. Ye shall have what there is, but I'll not take the bread from the children's mouths for ye!"

The satisfied look upon the sexton's face, as he rode away on his gaunt black horse, was significant of confidence in his debtor.

The begum now announced her presence. Tryntje greeted her with warmest gratitude.

"I heard what was not meant for my ears," began the visitor, apologetically.

"That one? He thought to rob me. He grows rich grinding the poor. He comes now, when my heart is heavy with grief for — for —"

She broke out into loud sobs, and for several minutes wept unrestrainedly.

"Never heed him. He shall not plague you. I will help you to the money."

"No."

"You may bring it back if you will."

"I shall not, — I shall not."

"T is better to owe me than him."

The vrouw still continued to shake her head.

"But your children, — they must be cared for. What have you left for them?"

"These!" cried the plucky vrouw, holding up her bony, hard-worked little hands.

"Poor Tryntje!"

"They gained money once; there is strength left in them yet, so they rob me not again."

"Tryntje!" The begum's face lighted up with a sudden thought.

"Ei?"

"Wait, good vrouw, — wait, my Tryntje. I may do something for you yet."

"So?"

But without waiting to explain herself further, the lady gave the order to her slaves, and rode hastily away.

Arriving home filled with her new project, she was surprised, upon entering the house, to hear the sound of voices in Catalina's room.

Going thither in some anxiety, she pushed open the door, and beheld Hester, in the middle of the floor, cowering, with looks of amazement, before Catalina, who, with flaming eyes and withering emphasis, poured forth upon her a flood of denunciation.

"You — you — who are you to cast off *him*, a high-born junker with a noble heart, who has followed you with years and years of faithful service? Your father, say you? Who was your father? All the fathers ever born should not make me break my word! Your father! What is he but a handful of dust! He has done harm enough. Let the grave hold him! I am tired of his name, and for you — go — go! Get back to your blacksmith! He is good enough for you! I want never — never — never to lay eyes on you again!"

Dumfounded and dismayed, Hester turned about, went downstairs and out of the house. Unconsciously making way for her to pass, the begum said not a word, but stood rooted to the spot, with her eyes fixed in wonder upon her daughter, who, the next moment rushing forward, fell into her arms, crying in pitiable, despairing tones, —

“Oh, my mother, help me !”

XXXVIII.

SCARCELY had Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury arrived in New York to take upon him the government of the province under a commission from William III., when he was called upon to mourn the death of that able monarch, and proclaim the accession of his own royal kinswoman, Anne Stuart.

In fact, his Lordship was not only cousin-german to her new Majesty, but, as is well known, so closely resembled her in face and figure that he plumed himself much upon the likeness, and was led to favor it in unusual ways.

As has been hinted, the coming of the new governor was most opportune for the Van Cortlandts and their friends. It so chanced that Steenie, in behalf of his mother and in furtherance of certain family interests, had occasion to wait upon his Lordship soon after his arrival, when he was received with so much favor that he naturally formed a high opinion of his Excellency's character and abilities.

On his part, the governor, in those early days while he was yet uncertain of his foothold, may have had reasons of his own for his kindly reception of a member of one of the most influential families in the province, a young man belonging to his own party, whose speech and air, moreover, were so marked by the settled gravity of middle age. It will be remembered that the begum had already remarked the junker's growing seriousness of manner.

"And what wonder he is become an old man?" cried Cornelis De Peyster, in consultation with Madam Van Cortlandt upon the subject. "He turns the cold shoulder upon all his old fellows; he'll have nothing to do with any of us, these days. And see how he lives! He is never seen at a rout, he has forgotten how to handle a gun, he sees no point to a joke, he must be ever at work."

"Yes," put in Madam, with a motherly extenuation, "he works too hard, — 't is that is the matter."

"'Works!'" went on the irreverent Cornelis; "but at what, pray you, Madam? If 'twere in the way of ambition to make a figure in the world, all well and good. But 't is nothing of the sort. 'T is poor cheap drudgery, and he works at it like a horse in a treadmill."

Steenie, meantime, unconscious of his friend's concern about him, kept on in his treadmill, until one morning he was brought to a standstill by a circumstance which would be quite too simple to mention if it had not resulted in his liberation.

This was nothing more nor less than a letter, — a curious letter, written in a graceful but illegible hand, which cost Steenie an hour's close labor to decipher. Its contents were as follows: —

MYNHEER, — Suffer that I commend myself to you in all honor and respect, and pray that this may find you and your worshipful family in well-being!

I come to beseech your aid and favor in a matter of moment. It is, be assured, no business of my own, else had I not ventured to call upon you. It is to favor the humble petition of one in suffering. This is the matter: —

There is one Vrouw Van Dorn, well known to you.

She lives now upon your estate. She is lately plunged in great grief by her husband's death. It may not yet reach your ears that she is left in great want, that she has scarce food for her children, and nothing wherewithal to pay the heavy funeral charges of her husband that is dead.

For all this, and despite her great need, she will take no aid. 'Tis a pride most strange in one of her condition. None the less is she fixed and stubborn in her resolve.

You know her history, and with what injustice she was treated by them lately in power. I have now a thought. It comes to me his new Excellency may look with more favor upon her suit. To this end it must be brought to his notice by one he is well inclined to. You know in what esteem my name is held by his Lordship, and for what cause. 'Tis therefore I stand now like one with the hands tied.

In this strait I think of you. I pray you may be moved to lift your voice and to stir your hand in the matter. Forgive such boldness, and let me know freely your mind. If you refuse, 'tis well, — you will have reasons. If your heart is rather moved to give help, I pray you to wait upon me at your convenience, when I will make known to you all that is needful, and have the matter fairly set forth in a paper to lay before his Excellency.

Whatever be your choice, it will not change the thoughts I have of you. Do nothing to oblige me! Obey only your own heart! I am done. I thank you for your pains in reading this letter. I pray you may have health and peace.

From your most respectful and obedient humble servant,

* * *

The signature was adorned with a flourish so involved and elaborate that the junker could make

nothing of it, yet he had no trouble in guessing the writer.

The call came to him like a voice out of the past, at once appealing and peremptory. Moved not by any impulse of benevolence, not by any love of justice, not even by any prompting of friendship for Tryntje, he obeyed, — obeyed as if in recognition of an obligation, but so mechanically that he went about the task required of him with the look and manner of a sleep-walker.

The begum received him with a gravity equal to his own. Perhaps because of her own profound preoccupation she seemed to find nothing unusual in his bearing.

“’Tis good to see you again, Mynheer, — we grow strangers of late. I was sure of your coming; I knew well ’t would touch your heart, — this noble charity. Sit, pray, and let us talk.”

The visitor’s eyes glanced furtively about the familiar room as he took the offered seat.

“Did I say ‘charity’? I take back the word; ’tis rather justice. But you know it all, Mynheer, this story?”

Steenie bowed, with his sleep-walking look.

“It needs not, then, that I explain, but rather tell me your mind, Mynheer. Think you his Excellency will listen to our suit with favor?”

“Pardon!”

The lady saw instantly that she had been talking to deaf ears. Oddly enough, something very like a gleam of gratification at the discourtesy showed for a moment in her face, but directly gave way to her former zealous look as she repeated with gentle emphasis, —

"Will his Lordship, think you, be inclined to see justice done the poor woman?"

"'T is like — I hope so — er — there is good ground to expect it."

"Lies it in his Lordship's power to amend the wrong?"

"'Wrong'!" repeated the junker again at sea.

"May he of his own will give order that the money be paid back, or is it a matter for the council? Pity my ignorance!"

"The council, — humph! 'T is rather a question for the assembly!"

"Then the governor can do nothing in the matter?"

"Anything, everything; they will heed his slightest beck till the honeymoon is over," answered Steenie, with a touch of irony, as he straightened himself in his chair and gave his mind at last to the subject.

"And you, Mynheer, — will you, then, take the great trouble to lay the matter before his Excellency?"

"Most willingly; 't is for that I —"

The sound of voices and steps outside in the passage caused him to stop. He listened a moment; then rose, with a troubled look.

"Are you in haste, Mynheer?"

"I have — er — pressing matters needing my attention."

"Let me not hold you. I — but since you have business — I am most bounden for your pains. Will it suit your convenience to move soon in the matter, Mynheer?"

"To-morrow or the day following, at his Lordship's leisure I will wait upon him."

"'T is sooner than I had hoped. Let us pray you may persuade him; and if you do, oh, Mynheer —"

"Pardon?"

"What a joy for the poor woman!"

"I will do my best."

"'T were a pity — that —"

"Eh?"

"— she should not know it without loss of time."

"So!"

Blind to the subtle insinuation of this suggestion, the junker stood obtusely staring.

"A thought comes to my mind —" The lady struggled with a momentary embarrassment.

"What thought?"

"How much greater pleasure if she could hear it from your own lips!"

"You would have me tell her?"

"'T is on your homeward way."

"So 't is. Yes, I will do it. I will stop at the door. What more, then, is there?"

"Nothing, 't is all. Take my thanks, a thousand thanks, Mynheer, for this great aid. 'T is raising a poor creature from the dust. My heart goes with you on this business. I think of nothing till the good news comes."

Since Rip's death, the begum, for reasons not hard to understand, had talked much at home of Tryntje's bereavement and of the sad state of things at the bouwerie. It was with no surprise, then, that Catalina heard the hackneyed subject brought up again, next morning, at table. As usual, of late, she gave little heed to what was said beyond a general recognition of the topic. It was otherwise when, an hour later, her mother came suddenly upon her, cloaked and hooded, in the passage, as she was about stealing forth to her old haunt upon the rocks.

"So, Catalina? 'Tis well I saw you. You are going out, you may do me a service. Here are some things I had made ready for Tryntje —"

"But I — 't was not that way I had in mind to go."

"What matters to you one way or another? And she, poor woman, is in sore need. I have neglected her these last days."

"Kouba will do as well."

"No; she takes it to heart you go not to see her."

"'Tis a great distance."

"Take your time. What need for haste? You may eat your dinner at the bouwerie."

Catalina hesitated, reflected; perhaps the long-stified voice of conscience seconded the motion. The begum saw her advantage, and failed not to pursue it.

"Tell her — say to poor Tryntje to take heart. There is good news in store for her, — mark you what I say, my daughter?"

"I hear you."

"Say that one has undertaken the matter who has great weight with the new governor."

"One who has weight with the governor," repeated Catalina, absently.

"He will go himself to plead her cause, and something must come of it."

"I will tell her."

"His Excellency cannot refuse to hearken to Mynheer Van Cortlandt."

The listener started, and turned in great agitation, as if to withdraw from the errand.

"Here are the things for Tryntje," went on the watchful begum. "You had best set forth at once; 'tis a good stretch. You may take your time com-

ing back. I will send Kouba with your horse. Look you wait there till he comes."

The same morning, mindful of his promise, Steenie presented himself at the governor's house. There having made known his wish for an interview, he was shown into the audience room and left, with the announcement that his Lordship was engaged at his toilet, but would presently appear.

Busied with his own thoughts, he scarcely heeded what the man said. He sat down, and for a long time waited patiently. Gradually it began to dawn upon him that he was being neglected. Perhaps he had been forgotten! The thought made him uneasy. He stalked up and down the floor, he looked out at the windows, he moved about the furniture, to no purpose. At last, when his patience was quite exhausted and he was about leaving the house in dudgeon, there was heard a movement in the ante-room, — the sound of footsteps and the rustle of garments. Remembering his errand, he controlled his irritation, and composed his face and manner to outward deference.

Directly the door was thrown open with a flourish, and two servants in livery appeared, backing slowly into the room. There followed a moment of strained expectancy, not void of effect upon the junker. Then an imposing figure filled the doorway. Steenie rose from his chair. A large woman, with an assumption of great state, came forward and seated herself upon a dais at the upper end of the room. She was followed by a train-bearer and several attendants, who solemnly ranged themselves behind her chair.

Steenie noted in some amazement the person and dress of this majestic gentlewoman. She seemed not

remarkable for either grace or beauty, being of unusual stature, with a clumsy figure, a heavy face, big, staring eyes, and a double chin.

Her dress, however, was ordered with an approach to magnificence. She wore a velvet robe, opened in front to show a bare neck, and a stomacher wrought in seed pearls, while at the waist the heavy folds of her gown were gathered into a girdle set in precious stones. Perched grotesquely upon her large wig shone a tiny head-gear in the form of a tiara.

Adjusting her draperies somewhat awkwardly, the lady directed her eyes with a look of extreme complacency upon Steenie, as if awaiting some explanation of his presence.

"May it please you, Madam, I am come to see his Excellency Lord Cornbury."

"Mynheer Van Cortlandt is a frequent visitor at our court," answered the lady, in a powerful baritone voice which made Steenie start and lose countenance.

The speaker's complacent look broadened into a smile at the junker's discomfiture, and she exchanged meaning glances with her attendants.

"Madam," continued Steenie, with dignity, "I am not come this time in my own behalf, but in the interest of one who suffered great injustice at the hands of those lately in power. I am persuaded that if I can but get speech with his Excellency, and make known to him the merits of the case, he will take it into consideration."

"Go on and tell your tale, Mynheer," said the lady, in a condescending tone, as she adjusted a bracelet.

"Pardon, your Ladyship, I would lay the matter before his Excellency in person."

Turning with a frown to repress a sudden tittering among her attendants, the lady repeated, —

“Go on, I say! If there be anything in the matter, it shall come to his ears, never fear!”

Impressed by the speaker's air of authority, Steenie judged it better not to prejudice his case by further hesitation, and so proceeded to tell Tryntje's story in the fewest possible words, darting an occasional glance of indignation at the giggling attendants, whom no awe of their mistress seemed to keep in check.

“These, then, are the facts, your ladyship,” said Steenie, in conclusion. “It is, as you will see, a plain case of robbery. If you have any influence with his Excellency —”

“Be assured I have, the very greatest,” interrupted the lady, cooling her florid face with a large feather fan. “Indeed, I may say he is always ruled by me in such cases; but I am free to confess,” she went on, with an air of irritation, “that I can give you no great hope in this matter. His Excellency is tired of these complaints; he hears of nothing else from morning till night. He is sorry for these people, he feels great pity for them, but there is a limit to his power, there is a limit to the funds in the treasury. 'Tis the people's money you ask for; his Excellency has no power over it, and there are needs more crying in other directions.”

Somewhat taken aback by this emphatic rebuff, Steenie stood casting about in his mind for some pretext by which he could get speech with his Excellency in person, when the door opened, and the lackey appeared ushering in another petitioner.

Directly the lady's face lighted up; she stretched forth her hand with a gracious smile.

The new-comer advanced. It was Cornelis De Peyster. Hardly had the two friends exchanged looks of recognition, when, to Steenie's amazement, Cornelis stalked up to the dais, knelt upon one knee, and kissing the lady's fat hand said in an undertone, which yet was audible in every part of the room,—

"I hope I find your Majesty in better health this morning."

"Hush!" said the lady, tapping his lips with her fan; "those are dangerous words, Mynheer, if maliciously reported."

"'Tis impossible to help it, your Maj—er—I would say—never was anything so like, I swear—'tis stronger this morning than ever," glancing back and forth from the lady's face to a large portrait of Queen Anne hanging above her on the wall. "The look, the attitude,—everything is complete; 'tis as if your Maj—er—had walked bodily down out of the frame."

"You would flatter me."

"Not I."

"There may be a look, a passing likeness, I grant you,—it has indeed been remarked; but nothing so strong as you would have it," rejoined the lady, in a tone which invited contradiction.

"Two peas are not more like, I swear; 'tis past all belief. But I intrude upon some graver business," looking around upon Steenie.

"No, Mynheer De Peyster is always welcome," said the lady, reassuringly; adding directly, with marked emphasis, "I wish I might say as much for others of his family whom—"

"Ah, poor Abraham! Forgive him. He was led astray by those Leislerians," interposed Cornelis,



"I hope I find your Majesty in better health this morning."

hastily, in defence of his brother, lately dismissed from the council.

The lady replied only with a sceptical look, and abruptly changed the subject.

"If I mistake not, Mynheer, I read a petitioning look in your eyes this morning."

"Well read, your Majesty."

"Have done with that before harm comes of it," said the lady, with a passing frown.

"You must tie my tongue first."

"What is your petition?"

"To remind your —"

"Hush, I say."

"— of a certain promise."

"What is that?"

"You cannot forget. I shall not let you forget. What a pity I have not the artist here this morning, — all is so perfect!"

A flush of extreme gratification overspread the lady's broad face. She was just gathering herself to answer, when the bell in the church close by began to ring, with such a deafening clamor that for some minutes nothing else could be heard.

"Mark that," said the lady, rising; "'t is striking twelve. You shall stay and dine with us, and we will talk further of this matter of a portrait. Meantime, as Colonel Heathcote is waiting with some business of the council, I must leave you for the moment. Come to me presently in my closet."

So saying, and graciously including the dumfounded Steenie in her farewell nod, the lady and her attendants disappeared from the room.

Left together, the two junkers gazed at each other for a moment in silence.

"Who — what means all this?" asked Steenie, with a look of hopeless perplexity.

"You do not know?"

"'T is Lady Cornbury, that?"

"*'Lady Cornbury!'*" repeated Cornelis, laughing in his friend's face. "Are you blind or a dunce, Steen?"

"Who, then?"

"Sh-h!" whispered Cornelis, discreetly lowering his voice. "Can you not see?"

"Eh?"

"'T is his Excellency himself."

"Lord Cornbury?"

"The same."

"In petticoats?"

"To favor the likeness, see you? Oh, 'tis well known, this weakness of his Lordship. Look now what comes of living out of the world. I'm in high favor because I humor the whim, — and with no violence to my conscience, either. Did you note the resemblance? Come here," dragging Steenie before the portrait. "See you there, now? They are like as twins."

Steenie stood gazing in silence, quite unable to believe the evidence of his own senses.

"What, then, are you doing here, since you knew not 't was his Excellency?" asked Cornelis.

"I came with a petition, and demanded to see his Lordship."

"And it was granted, — your suit?"

"No."

"So!" Cornelis laughed satirically, and added presently, in a good-humored tone, "Come, come, Steen, your wits are gone wool-gathering. It needed no prophet to say you would fail if you stood by, star-

ing, and never made the mistake of supposing that you were speaking with her Majesty in person. What is your business? Tell it to me. If it be anything short of restoring brother Abraham to the council, I may bring it about for you."

"Do, do. Try, at least, dear Corny. 'Tis a case crying for relief. See, here in this paper are the facts. You may have the little woman up herself to be questioned, and as many witnesses as you want."

"So! It sounds well," said Cornelis, glancing over the paper as he talked. "It seems just and right. 'Tis no great matter, either. Good!" he concluded, folding the paper and putting it in his pocket. "I am called to his closet, as you heard, and am kept to dinner. I will bring it before him, and 't will be granted, too, or I'm no courtier."

"Thanks, thanks, Corny. 'Tis like you. And you will bring me word?"

"The moment I am let free, never fear. Sh!"

A lackey appeared to summon Cornelis to his Excellency, and thereupon Steenie took leave.

Several hours later, true to his promise, Cornelis came to Steenie's door with the welcome news that his Excellency had pledged his word Tryntje's loss should be made good, if, upon inquiry, the case proved as deserving as represented. Thereto he summoned the dame to an examination next morning.

Thanking Cornelis cordially for his timely aid, Steenie set forth on his long ride home by way of the Sapokanican road.

The sun was fast sinking behind the distant palisades; his level rays, entangled as it seemed, in the roadside shrubbery, hung like a golden fleece from the thick-leaved branches. His quickening influence

withdrawn, nature called a halt. The glare and tumult of the day were gone. Night came on apace. The air resounded with the evening song of all created things, a rest-inspiring chorus. Lambs bled for entrance to the fold; cattle lowed for the loitering cow-boy; birds twittered drowsily as they sank to rest; the gossiping poultry clucked their good-night greetings as they sought vantage points in the apple-trees; tree-toads in their viewless haunts and frogs from the distant marsh heralded with joyous clamor the night's approach. It was nature's crooning-time, and Steenie listened unconsciously to the lullaby as he strode along busied with deeper matters, soothed in his own despite.

Arriving at Tryntje's bouwerie, he dismounted at the gate, and leaving his horse with a servant on the highway, sauntered up the grass-grown path.

Door and windows stood open, but nobody appeared. Steenie looked around with the critical eye of a landlord. The stoop was well swept; the yard was tidy. Upon a bench beside the door there lay some unfinished knitting; a busy kitten rolled about the ball of yarn upon the floor.

With the freedom of a neighbor, the visitor walked into the house. The supper-table was spread in the small living-room, the kettle was singing over the open fire, but the huysvrouw was nowhere to be seen. The junker called out once or twice to announce his presence. There was no answer. He searched the bedroom, peeped into the pantry, and bawled down the cellar stairs, and came at last to the back door. Clearly Tryntje had gone neighboring.

Pausing a moment as if in doubt what to do, Steenie turned back towards the front of the house.

As he passed through the living-room he heard a voice. He stopped. It was somebody on the stoop talking to the kitten. Tryntje had been milking and had come in from the barn. He strode forward and presented himself at the door.

Dropping kitten and knitting, the new-comer sprang to her feet in dismay. Steenie's face fell. The joyous expectation faded from his eyes. He stood a moment with a troubled look; then, gravely stepping forth, said, in tones carefully guarded, —

"I was looking for Tryntje. Say to her, please, that I will come again to-morrow."

He turned and walked towards the highway. A despairing cry rang in his ears. He stopped.

"Mynheer — Mynheer!"

The words sounded like a wail. He hurried back and lifted the prostrate figure from the bench. Slipping from his hold, she sank to her knees, with face buried in her hands.

"Forgive — oh, forgive me, Mynheer!"

"Catalina!"

"I did not know —"

"What say you?"

"I thought — I thought you bound to her."

"To Hester?"

"Yes."

"But," he cried, tenderly gathering the little figure once more in his arms, and striving to look into the telltale face, — "but you told me —"

"A wicked lie!" she gasped, hiding her burning blushes upon his shoulder.

